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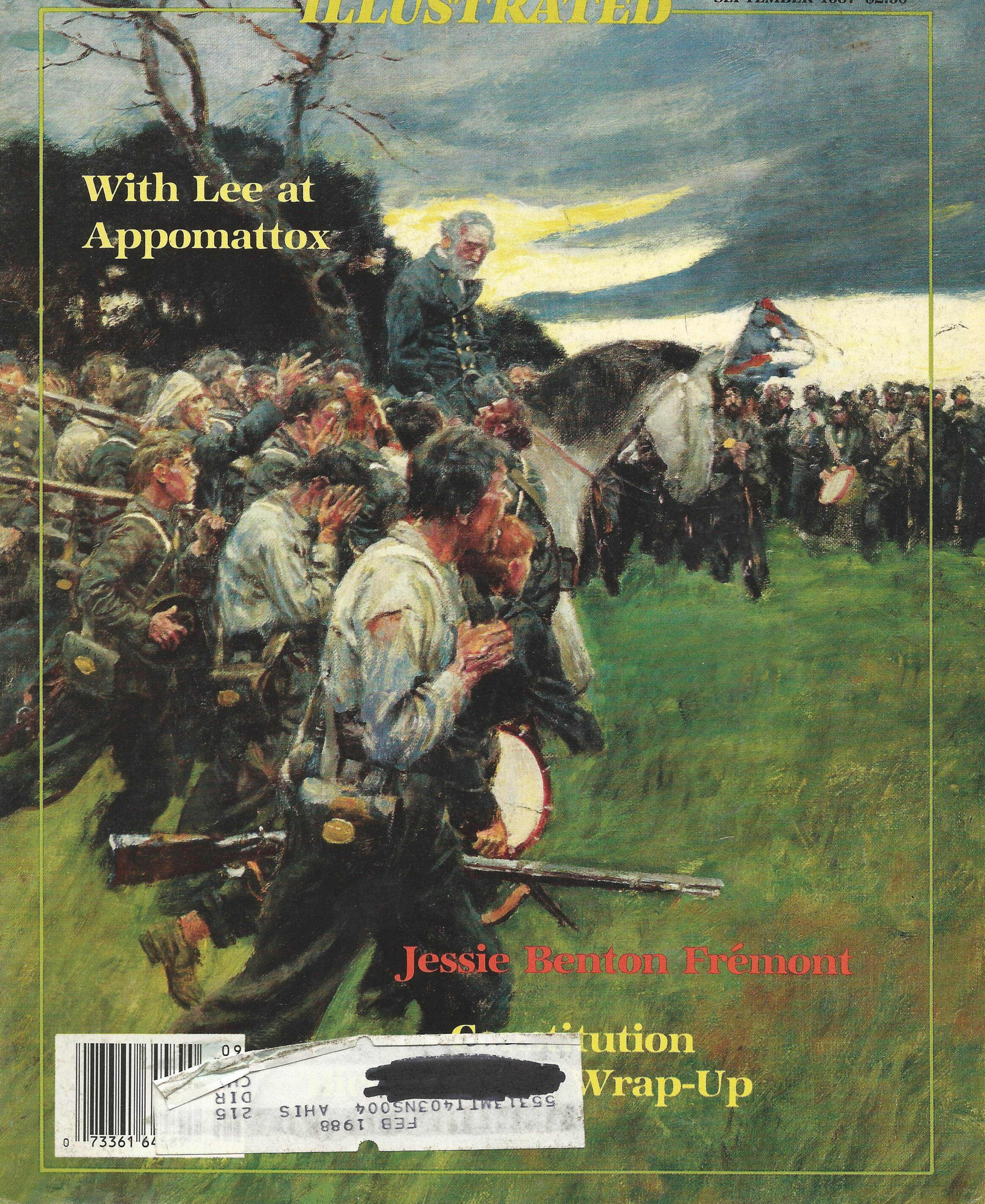

With Lee at Appomattox

Jessie Benton Frémont

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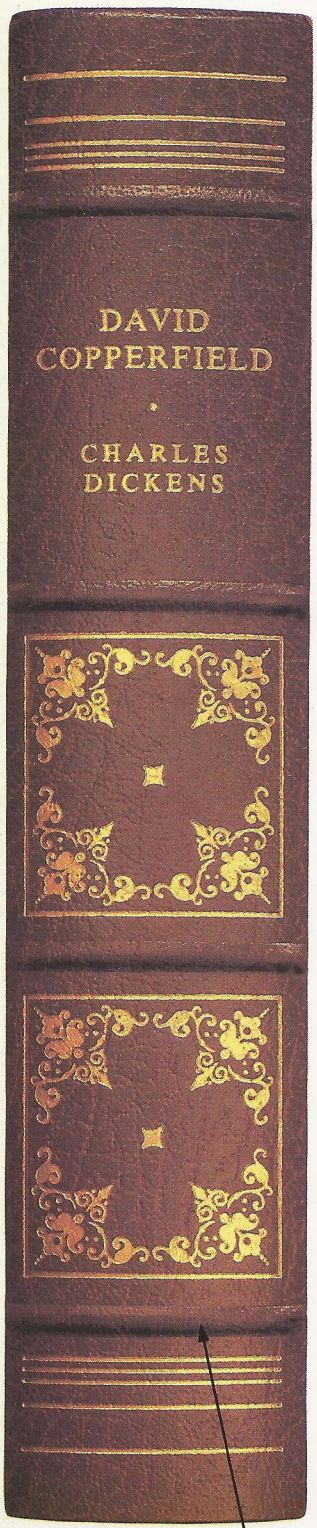
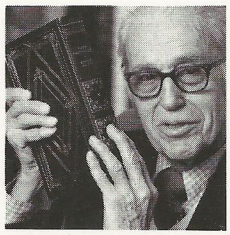
Wrap-Up

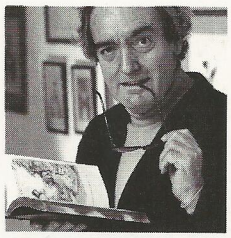
We asked these three experts to put a price on this edition of Dickens' DAVID COPPERFIELD. $14.50.





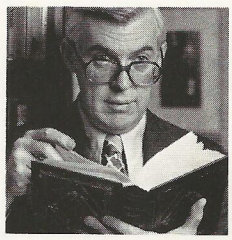
"The raised spine is a giveaway. That's quality binding. **$30.**"

KEN McCORMICK,
Sr. Consulting Editor,
Doubleday.



"The illustrations are superb. Excellent typography. **$35.**"

CLIVE BARNES,
Cultural critic, New York Post



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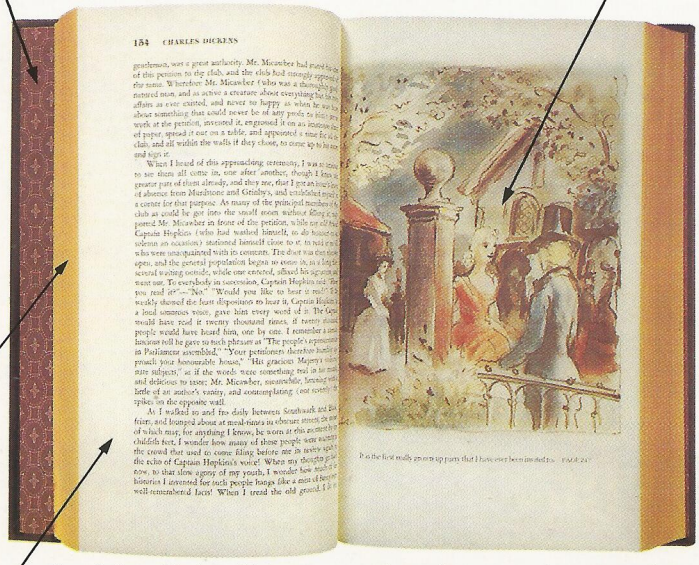

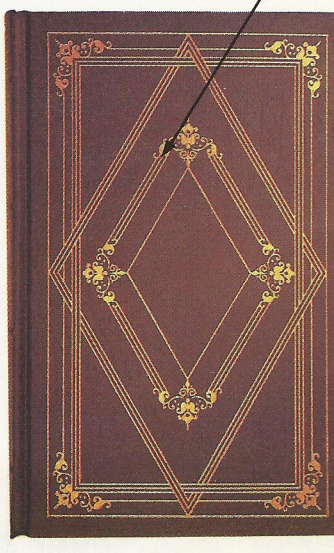

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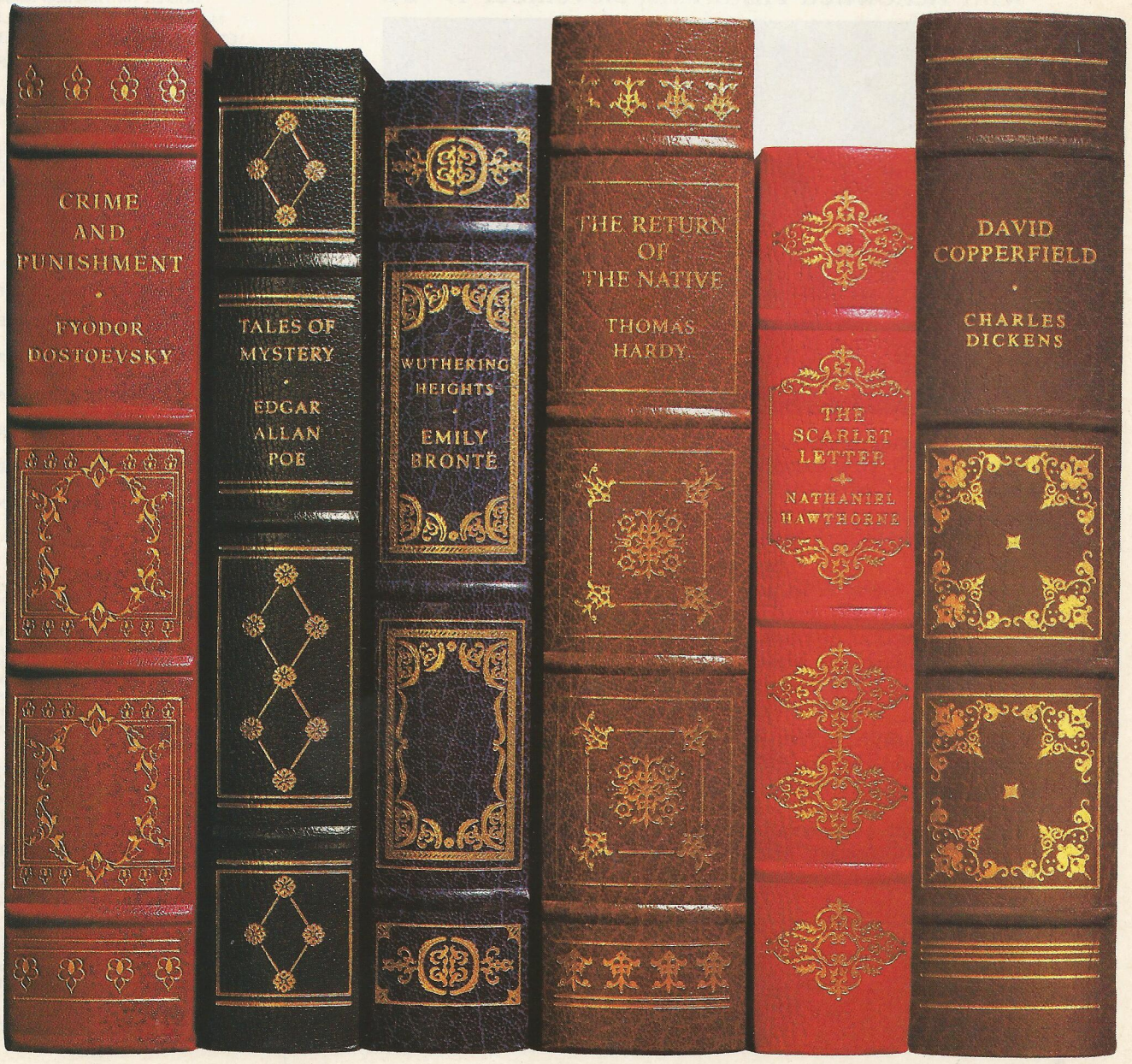

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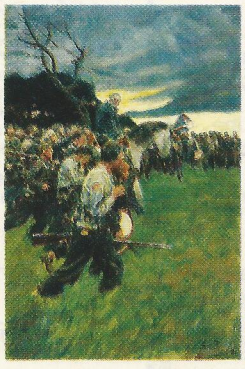

Cover

"His Army Broke Up and Followed Him," by master illustrator Howard Pyle, depicts the somber moment when Confederate General Robert E. Lee rejoined his heartbroken troops after surrendering to Federal forces on April 9, 1865. One of Lee's generals describes the final campaign of the Army of Northern Virginia, including its surrender at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on pages 42-56 of this issue.

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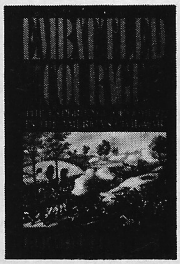

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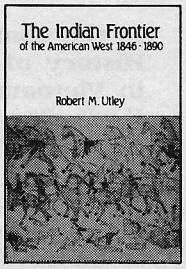

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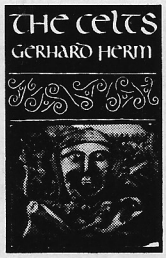

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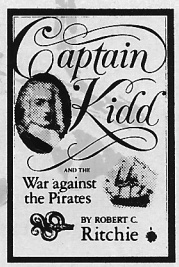

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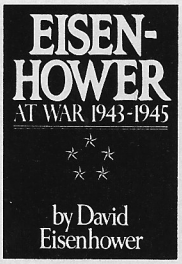

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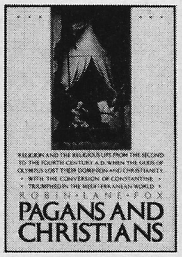

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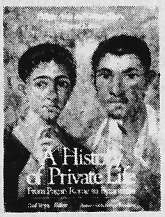

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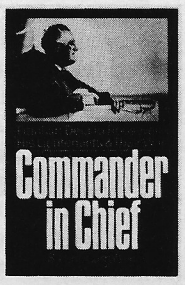

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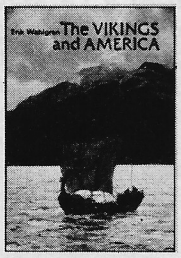

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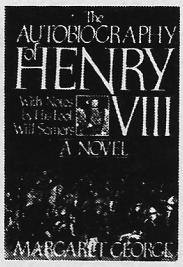

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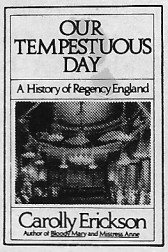

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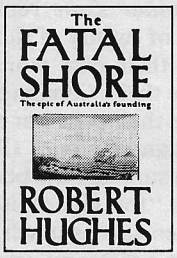

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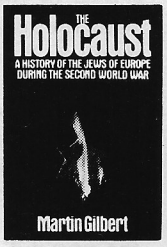

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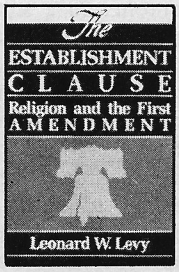

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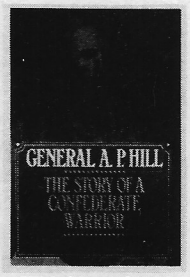

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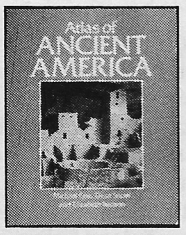

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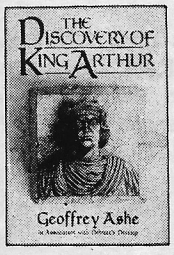

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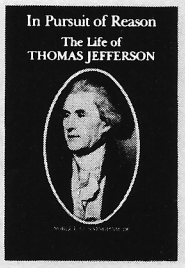

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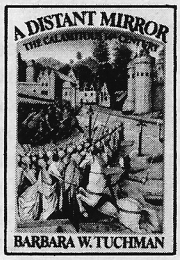

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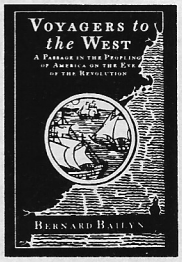

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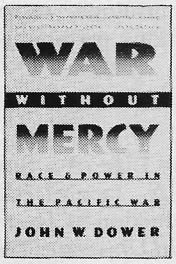

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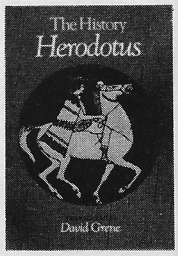

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History Bookshelf

The Shaker Holy Land: A Community Portrait by Edward R. Horgan *(The Harvard Common Press, Boston, 1987; 218 pages, illustrated, $9.95 paperback).*

The Shakers—communal, celibate, peace-loving, industrious—came to America in 1774 led by Mother Ann Lee. Until her death in 1784 Mother Ann led the ministry in its growth in the New World. During about half the time that she led the group, Mother Ann established her headquarters in Harvard and Shirley, twin Shaker villages not far from Boston. These Shaker communities provide in microcosm the story of all Shakerism. The author examines Shaker persecution, celibacy, work ethic, inventions, ritual Sabbath dances designed to "shake" evil influences out of the body and soul, and the gradual decline of the sect due to urbanization, industrialization, and the group's doctrine of celibacy. Today only a handful of women, clustered into two New England communities, remain. Rare contemporary photographs illustrate the strength and character of these determined, peaceful people. The book also includes maps and a complete guide to museums, restorations, and collections pertaining to the Shakers.

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl by Harriet A. Jacobs; edited and with an introduction by Jean Fagen Yellin *(Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987; 306 pages, illustrated, $37.50).*

Originally published in 1861, Harriet A. Jacobs's autobiography remains an insightful and fascinating look at the antebellum south. Jacobs, born a slave in 1831, became a fugitive from her North Carolina home in the 1830s when she fled to the north to seek freedom. She recounts, through fictitious names, incidents and events of her years as a slave and of her years as a fugitive trying to obtain freedom. Jacobs' wrote her autobiography under the alias of Linda Brent, the book's heroine and narrator. She recounts her family history and recalls the degradation of slavery. Through her story, Jacobs conveys to the reader the 19th century Afro-American experience. Jean Fagen Yellin's 1987 version retains the original Jacob book but Yellin added photographs and some clarification of characters and places.

Very Poor and of a Lo Make: The Journal of Abner Sanger edited by Lois Stabler with illustrations by Arthur Tremblay*(Published for the Historical Society of Cheshire County by Peter E. Randall, Publisher, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1987; 682 pages, illustrated, $30.00.)*

Beginning more than two hundred years ago, a commoner in a small, unremarkable New Hampshire community, kept a remarkable journal of his everyday life during the critical Revolutionary War period in American history. What makes this journal unique is that early records of ordinary people, in their own words, are rare. Although once described in a legal proceeding as "poor and of a lo make," Abner Sanger was literate, well-read, and well-informed about current affairs. Although he marched to Lexington and Concord with the rebels he later became a Tory. He did not play a significant role in the Revolutionary War nor in his community. But through his careful recordings of his everyday life in Keene (1774-1782) and Dublin (1791-1794), New Hampshire, Sanger gives modern day readers a fresh, intimate glimpse into eighteenth century life. Transcribed from the original manuscript, passed down from generation to generation until it was sold in 1914 to the Library of Congress, where it now resides, the Sanger journal is an important document for those interested in New England and Connecticut River Valley history, the American Revolution, and life on both a frontier farm and in a small New England town. Editor Lois Stabler modernized the language to make it more understandable to today's audience, and provided extensive footnotes, biographical notes, maps, and an index.

In the Combat Zone: An Oral History of American Women in Vietnam by Kathryn Marshall *(Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1987; 270 pages, $17.95).*

Twelve years after the United States officially ended military involvement in Vietnam, Americans still have not fully interpreted the effects of the "one war we lost" upon those who served there. While Hollywood has produced successful movies concerning the war in Southeast Asia, it, like most other American institutions, has continually ignored the involvement of American women in Vietnam. Kathryn Marshall sets out to correct this ignorance. From nurses to decoders, secretaries to air traffic controllers, Marshall interviewed hundreds of female Vietnam veterans.*In the Combat Zone* represents the accounts of twenty of those women. Through their own words, these women relate their Vietnam experiences as well as their post-war experiences. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Ruth Sidisin summed the book up when she said "the gist of it is . . . that the women saw as much as the guys did, but in a different way."

A. Lincoln: His Last 24 Hours by W. Emerson Reck *(McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, North Carolina 1987; 240 pages, illustrated, $19.95).*

Abraham Lincoln earned the unfortunate distinction of being the first United States president to be assassinated. Since that day, April 14, 1865, mystery and myth have surrounded his death and W. Emerson Reck sets out to clarify the details and events of Lincoln's last day. Thirty years of research have led to a book of eyewitness accounts, facts and reactions of many of Washington's leading citizens as well as reactions from Lincoln's family and friends. A four-part appendix explains still unresolved mysteries surrounding the slaying. Reck also includes John Wilkes Booth's activities on that spring day and rare, never-before-published photographs are also included.

The Other Side of Time: A Combat Surgeon in World War II by Brendan Phibbs *(Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1987; 341 pages, $17.95).*

In November 1944, the Allies fought a bloody battle at Alsace-Lorraine in Northern France. Cardiologist Brendan Phibbs was there as a surgeon with Combat B, Twelfth Armored Division, Seventh U.S. Army, and he remained a surgeon with his unit through the invasion of Germany in 1945. *The Other Side of Time* is a firsthand account of Phibbs' experiences in World War II. His memoirs include diary accounts, historical references and observations on human nature. Sometimes funny, but often angry, Phibbs' book contains his thoughts and feelings on battles, bureaucracy and the conditions the medics were forced to work under. He includes recollections of USO shows, the horror of living conditions and the ingenuity of the GI. Fluent in German and adequate in French, Phibbs also interrogated POWs and collaborated with the local population.

Mutiny on the Amistad: The Saga of a Slave Revolt by Howard Jones *(Oxford University Press, New York, 1987; 271 pages, illustrated, $22.95).*

In 1839, a group of African blacks, led by a man named Joseph Cinque, revolted onboard the Spanish slave ship, the *Amistad*, while it was sailing the Caribbean. They steered the ship northward to Montauk, Long Island, where it was impounded by an American Naval vessel. The Africans were jailed in Connecticut while the Spanish claimed the Americans had violated their property rights. What ensued was a controversy between abolitionists and proslavery advocates over natural law, evangelical arguments and moral suasion. *In Mutiny on the Amistad*, Howard Jones tells how the incident ended up before the U.S. Supreme Court and he recreates the events of the trial which eventually led to sending the captive slaves back to Africa. ★

Mailbox

Misplaced Grave

Harold Holzer's "Philadelphia 1787" [May 1987 issue] was very interesting, especially since Dr. Hugh Williamson, a signer of the Constitution for North Carolina, resided in our historic town of Edenton from 1777 until 1790.

There is an error, however, in that Holzer states on page 24 that "There was Christ Church on Second Street, where delegate James Wilson would be buried in 1798." James Wilson is buried in Christ Church now, but from the time of his death at Horneblow's Tavern in Edenton, North Carolina, on August 21, 1798, until November 20, 1906, he rested in the Johnston family graveyard in Edenton.

Amidst an impressive ceremony attended by local, state, and national dignitaries, Wilson's remains were exhumed on November 20, 1906, and sent to Philadelphia where they were reburied in Christ Church. (His flat-topped gravestone still remains in the Edenton cemetery.)

Marguerite B. McCall
Education Coordinator
Edenton Historical Commission
Edenton, North Carolina

Donner Tragedy

In a recent letter to *American History Illustrated* about the "Donner Tragedy" [October 1986 issue], the writer asked if the Donner fate was avoidable. Of course it was. Had Donner listened to the advice given him he would have delayed his departure. But, no, he was a bullheaded European who had only contempt for the Americans. Donner grew up in the Swiss Alps and thought he knew more about crossing mountains than the stupid Americans. If he had waited only twenty-four hours his chances for getting over the Sierra safely would have been much better. Anyone who has or does live in Reno knows how fast the snow comes down and how deep it piles up—and how rapidly it melts away the next day. It was already snowing in Reno when Donner left and he was told what conditions would be like in the pass. But he wouldn't listen.

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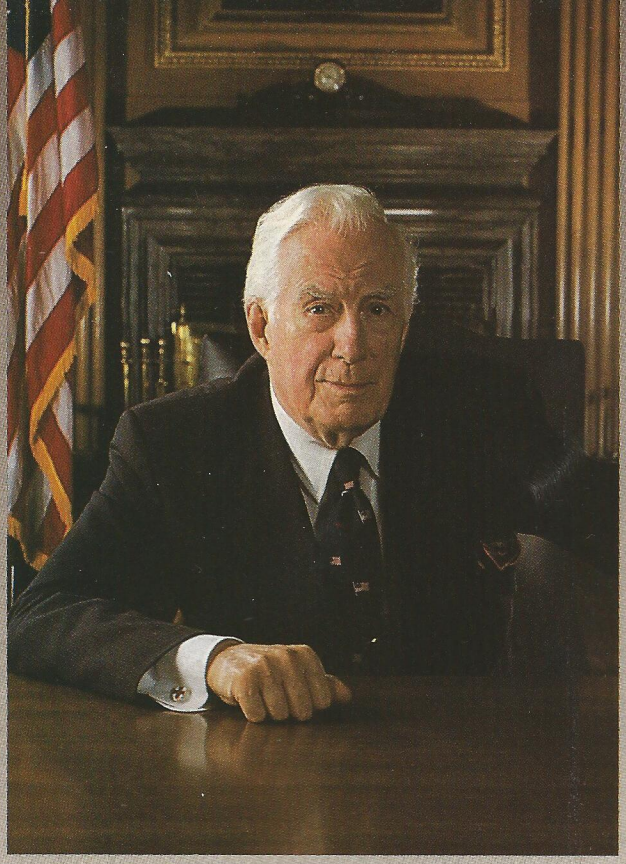

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Chief Justice Burger has donated the original of this sculpture to The Foundation for the Commemoration of the United States Constitution, which will share a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this reproduction of the original sculpture; none of the proceeds will be received by Chief Justice Burger.

Foster's "Darky" Language

Allison Thompson's piece on Stephen Foster [April 1987 issue] was very interesting, and the comment that his use of "darky language" is a difficult one to address was especially true.

The best explanation I have heard is that Foster, like all composers, wrote for money in order to survive. (Critical acclaim of music as "artistic" or, in his case, as "influential" are rarely contemporaneous with the songs, but come later, after the passage of time and the composer's demise). Sheet music was the prime source of income for composers, and public exposure was necessary to sell that sheet music. Without radio stations, TV, or record albums to promote songs in those days, the best exposure a composer could find was the state or traveling minstrel shows. And to write for the minstrel show's audience, a composer had to use "darky" language along with the sob-story melodrama, such as "Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground" and "Old Dog Tray." It was expected, and Foster, being poor, had a desire to be a commercial success. That he did not achieve that financial success was due mostly to the opportunistic people who bought and published his songs for peanuts.

In any case, while researching a piece on the history of music censorship (published as the cover article in the March 1987 issue of *Reason*), I ran across a thirty-year-old debate involving Foster's use of "darky" and other unfortunate and bygone terms, a debate that raged briefly in the U.S. Congress.

Leo N. Miletich
University of Texas-
El Paso Library
El Paso, Texas

The editors welcome comments from our readers. While we endeavor to publish a representative sampling of this correspondence, we regret that limited space prevents us from printing every letter. Address correspondence to The Mailbox, American History Illustrated, Box 8200, Harrisburg, PA 17105. ★

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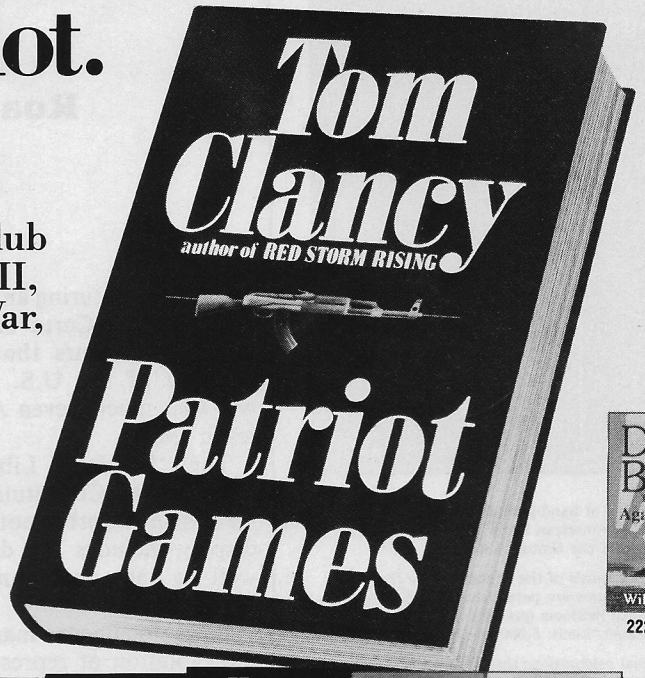

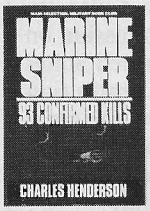

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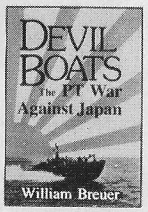

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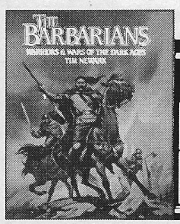

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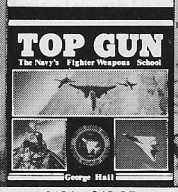

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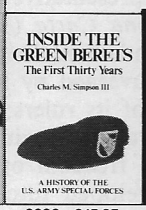

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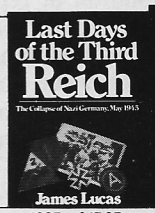

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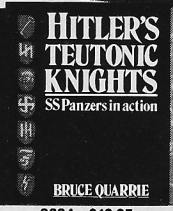

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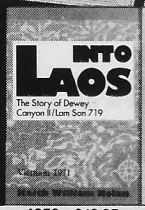

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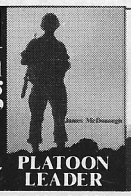

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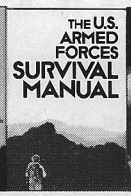

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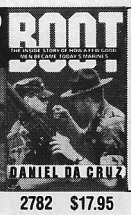

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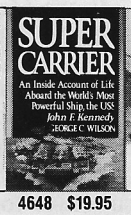

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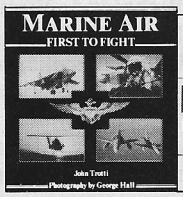

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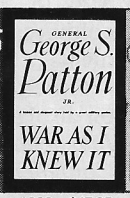

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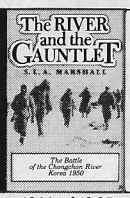

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Roads to Liberty Exhibit

An exhibit featuring an original 1215 A.D. Magna Carta and copies of other documents that led to the drafting of the U.S. Constitution will visit ninety-seven American cities in 1987.

The "Roads to Liberty: Magna Carta to the Constitution," exhibit travels in a forty-foot trailer. The display includes the documents as well as rare coins and historical newspapers.

Each document marks a step in the evolution of representative government. The *Magna Carta* (1215) established four fundamental rights: that a nation be governed by laws, not by the whims of its rulers; due process of law; no taxation without representation; and freedom of the church, which developed into the principle of religious freedom.

In the *Mayflower Compact* (1620) pilgrims agreed to uphold just and equal laws in Plymouth, Massachusetts. The *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* (1638-9) is the first written American constitution. It created a separate colony of three Connecticut River towns. The *Resolution of May 15, 1776* encouraged American colonies to form separate governments.

Other, better-known documents on display include the *Declaration of Independence* (1776), the *Articles of Confederation* (1781), the *Northwest Ordinance* (1787), the *Annapolis Resolution* (1786), the *Bill of Rights* (1791), and *Amendments 11-26.*

The exhibit, designed by Smithsonian Institution personnel, has been called by Retired Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger "one of the most significant historical projects of 1987."

"Roads to Liberty," launched in March in front of the the White House, will visit cities in twenty-five states. Its tour will end September 11 with a celebration in New York City.

The American Express Company is sponsoring the million-dollar exhibit along with The Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, the U.S. Constitution Council of the Thirteen Original States and in cooperation with the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, Lincolnshire, England.

In the fall, the exhibit's original Magna Carta will return to its centuries-old resting place at Lincoln Cathedral.

Remaining stops on the exhibit tour include:

August 16—Charlotte, North Carolina
August 17—Asheville, North Carolina
August 18—Winston-Salem, North Carolina
August 19-20—Raleigh, North Carolina
August 21—New Bern, North Carolina

August 23-24—Yorktown, Virginia
August 25—Richmond, Virginia
August 26—Roanoke, Virginia
August 27—Charlottesville, Virginia
August 28—Alexandria, Virginia

August 30—Annapolis, Maryland
August 31-September 1—Baltimore, Maryland
September 2-3—Rockville, Maryland
September 4—Hagerstown, Maryland

September 6-11—New York, New York

Compiled from information provided by Jim and Gwyneth Bersie ★

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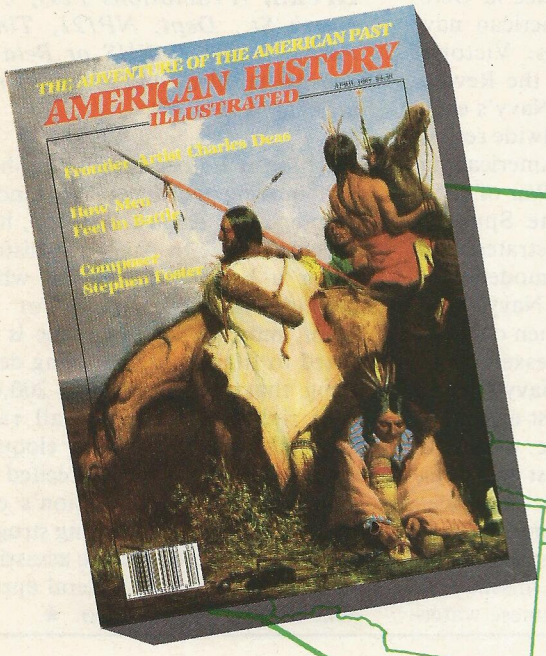

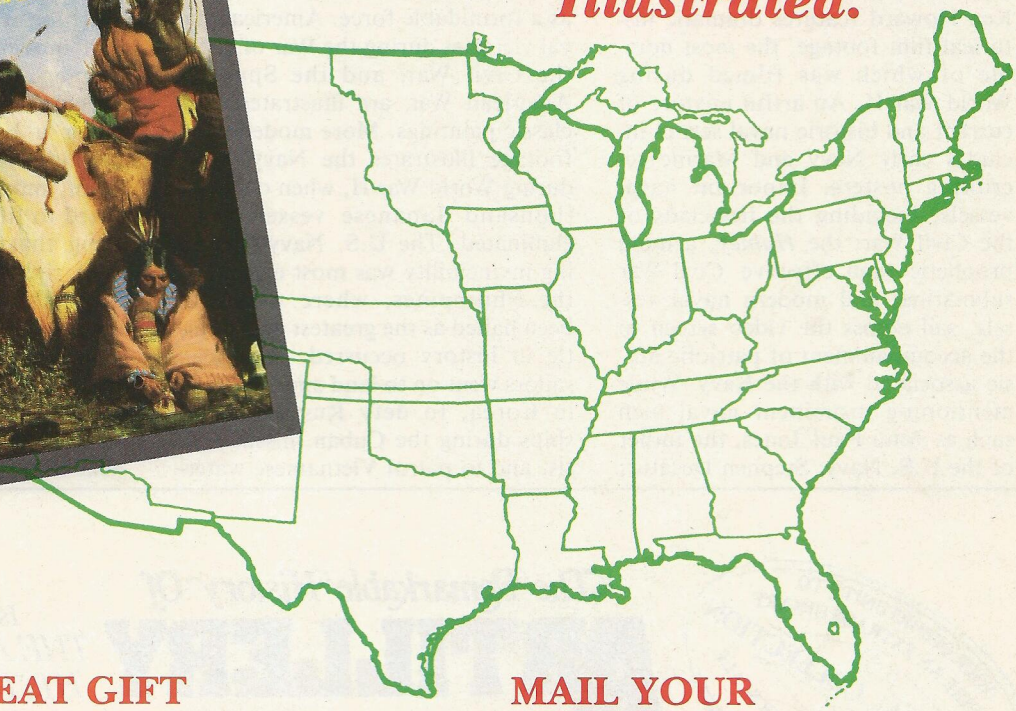

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Anchors Aweigh: The United States Navy Story *(Promotions Plus, 6730 North St., Dept. NP121, Tinley Park IL 60477, VHS or Beta videocassette, 45 minutes, 1985, color, $29.95).*

The U.S. Department of Defense teamed up with Turner Broadcasting Systems to produce this brief history of the United States Navy as part of its *In Defense of Freedom* series. The fast-paced video narrated by Ken Howard features dramatic historical film footage, the most notable of which was filmed during World War II. An artful mixture of current and historic naval scenes includes early Navy and Marine recruiting posters. Important naval vessels, including the ironclads of the Civil War; the *Hunley*, a more prophetic than effective Civil War submarine; and modern naval vessels, sail across the video screen to the accompaniment of patriotic music associated with the Navy. While mentioning prominent naval men such as John Paul Jones, the father of the U.S. Navy; Stephen Decatur; Isaac Hull; Oliver Hazard Perry as well as more recent maritime heroes, *Anchors Aweigh* illustrates the history of the U.S. Navy from its inception more than two hundred years ago to its accomplishments in Vietnam and its current peacekeeping roles. Voted into existence in October 1775, the first American navy consisted of two ships. Victories over the British during the Revolutionary War began the Navy's eventual acquisition of worldwide respect as a formidable force. American naval victories during the War of 1812, the Civil War, and the Spanish-American War, are illustrated with classic paintings. More modern film footage illustrates the Navy's role during World War II, when over one thousand Japanese vessels were eliminated. The U.S. Navy's seeming invincibility was most evident in the Philippines, where what has been hailed as the greatest naval battle in history occurred. American sailors went on to land amphibiously in Korea, to defy Russian cargo ships during the Cuban missile Crisis, and to patrol Vietnamese waterways during that conflict. The video provides a well-spent forty-five minutes not only for naval enthusiasts, but for a general audience as well.

Martin Luther King: I Have A Dream *(Promotions Plus, 6730 North St., Dept. NP121, Tinley Park, IL 60477; VHS or Beta videocassette, black and white, 30 minutes, 1986, $19.95).*

Dr. Martin Luther King's prophetic and moving words at the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963, have become classic to American history. After a brief introduction which provides a background for the event, most of the videotape is devoted to film footage of King delivering that speech. About 200,000 civil rights marchers of all races heard the passionate and eloquent speech that is so widely recited today. King united the nation's civil rights advocates for the long struggle for equality. Scenes of the assassination of King and his funeral appear near the end of the video. ★

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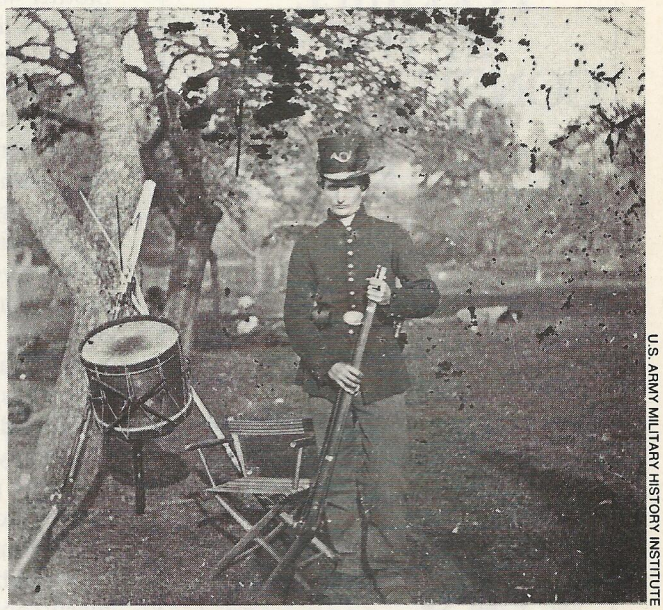

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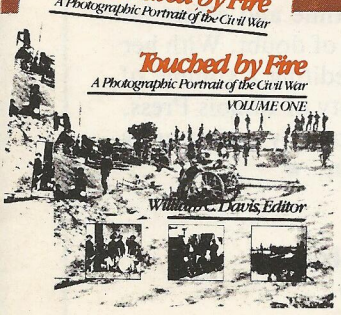

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Editor's Desk

IT SEEMS that most of us have the desire, at some point in our lives, to write a book. But for the majority of us, that ambition remains an unrealized dream.

For the author of the lead article in this issue, however, the dream became a reality. California author Pamela Herr's first book, a 496-page biography of nineteenth-century heroine Jessie Benton Frémont, was published last spring by Franklin Watts.

Pamela Herr recalls that even as a child she wanted to become a writer. "My parents always encouraged me," she says. "They never suggested that writing a book was an impossible goal. My mother was also a natural storyteller," she adds,and as a child I loved to listen to her accounts of peoples' lives in the small Indiana town where she grew up. Biography seems a natural extension of that early fascination."

A literature major at Harvard, Herr later discovered her subject, Jessie Benton Frémont, while working as managing editor of *The American West*, a magazine of western history. During the course of editing hundreds of articles, she noticed that while there was much written about the West of cowboys, Indians, and miners, women were often neglected, or if included at all, sentimentalized rather than treated realistically. She found this was particularly true of Jessie Benton Frémont. Although Jessie's husband, explorer John Charles Frémont, was already the subject of several good biographies, Jessie had been treated less seriously, in dated, semifictionalized accounts. The time seemed ripe for a modern factual biography.

Herr's project proved to be an enormous one: the research and writing occupied her attention for six years. "If I had realized at the beginning how much work would really be involved," she says, "I probably would never have started the book." Her research regularly took her to California's Stanford, Bancroft, and Huntington Libraries, as well as to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles. She also spent several productive weeks at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. "The research was fun," she recalls, "the writing was hard work."

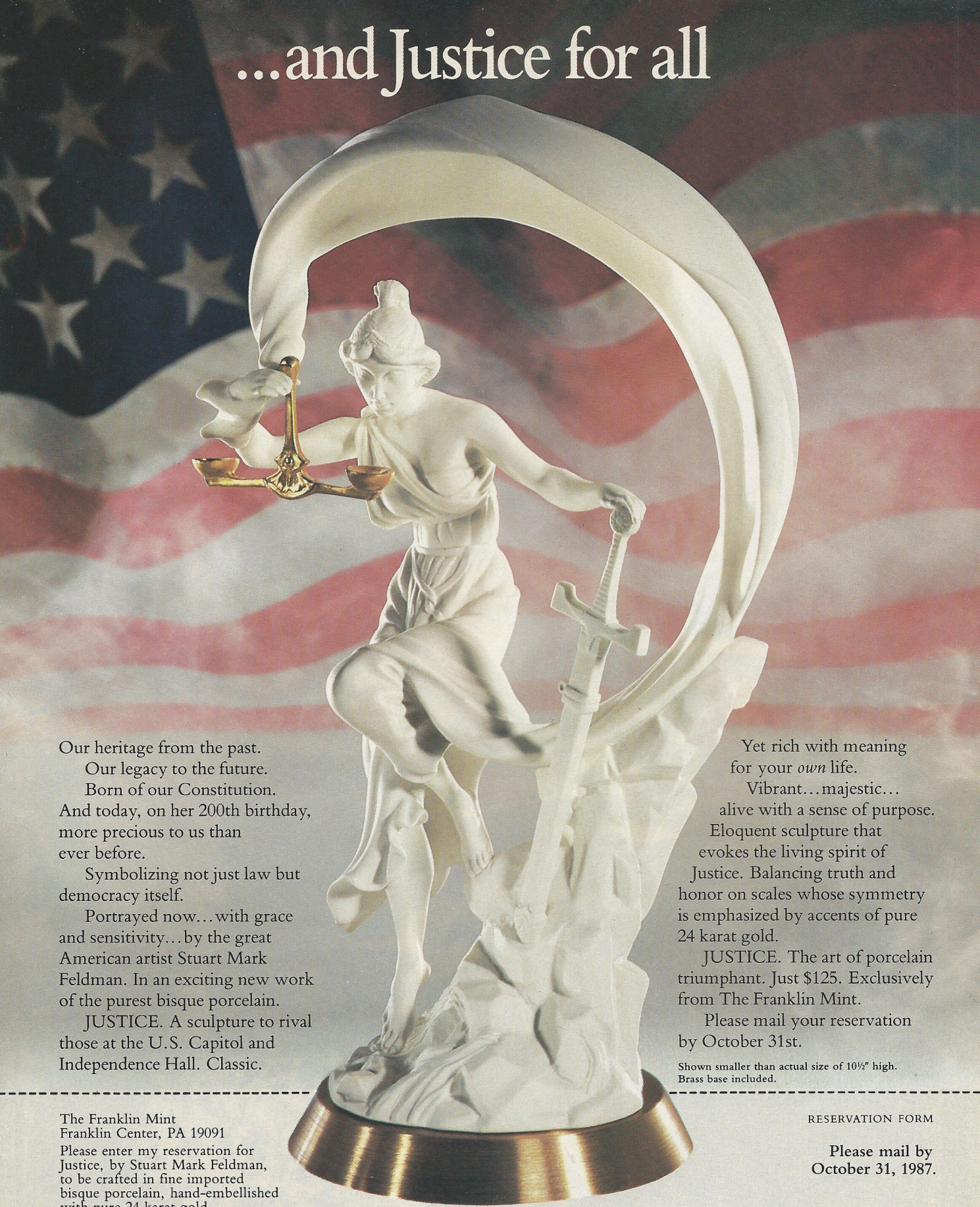
As part of her research, Herr located some five hundred of Jessie Frémont's letters. Especially revealing were a series of more than a hundred letters from Jessie to her closest woman friend, Elizabeth Blair Lee, preserved in the Princeton University Library and never used by Frémont biographers. "These unusually frank letters were a tremendous help in understanding Jessie's inner feelings," the author notes.

Herr discovered that Jessie Frémont's life was both more interesting and more complex than the myth suggested. "I was surprised to find how many of the problems she encountered are faced by women today. She became very human to me."

Was the satisfaction of seeing her manuscript finally attain completion and then publication worth all of the time and effort involved? "Yes!," Herr responds, without a trace of doubt. With her first book now completed, Herr is already co-editing a volume of Jessie Benton Frémont's letters for the University of Illinois Press, and she is thinking about her next project—probably a biography of another nineteenth-century American woman. ★

Ed Holm
Editor

...and Justice for all



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This Victorian heroine was clever, passionate, and ambitious—dangerous qualities for a woman in nineteenth-century America.

Jessie Benton Frémont

by Pamela Herr

DURING THE LAST DECADE of the nineteenth century, an old woman—tiny, white-haired, and frail—lived out the remaining years of her life in a modest brown-shingled house in Los Angeles. She had been one of the most extraordinary women of her time, and visitors still remarked on the keenness of her mind, the wit and dazzle of her conversation. But for the most part, Jessie Benton Frémont lived quietly, privately: reading, writing (still hoping to earn a few precious dollars with her skillful pen), relishing such everyday pleasures as the scent of violets in her garden, the soft glow of her acacia trees at sunset.

Jessie Frémont's Los Angeles home—the gift of a committee of California women—contained only a small portion of the memorabilia from her rich life, for poverty had long since forced her to sell most of the beautiful furniture, paintings, and objects she once owned. Still, she had managed to save three portraits. These dominated the house.

The first, a painting of Jessie's father, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, portrayed a large, powerfully built man with a dark cloak thrown dramatically across his broad shoulders. Arrogant, flamboyant, brilliant, in his prime Benton had been the Senate's most influential spokesman for Jacksonian democracy and western expansion; in his declining years, a raging, wounded lion, prophesying civil war as he went down to electoral defeat in 1851 for his stand against the spread of slavery.

The second portrait showed a strikingly handsome man in his mid-seventies, with a full head of white hair, a trim beard and moustache, and keen, hooded eyes. This was Jessie's husband,

JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT IN HER LOS ANGELES HOME, CIRCA 1892;
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Jessie was a heroine too spirited for her age, too gifted to be readily contained within the narrow image of proper Victorian womanhood.

the controversial, enigmatic John Charles Frémont—explorer, gold-rush millionaire, presidential candidate, and bankrupt.

The third picture was of Jessie herself. Painted when she was in her early thirties, it showed a deceptively serene young woman with a full oval face, luminous brown eyes, and abundant dark hair swept back and caught at the nape of her neck. Although a mole by the mouth gave the portrait a touch of realism, its conventional nineteenth-century style scarcely suggested the robust mind, the passionate heart, the energy and ambition behind the smooth young face, for Jessie Frémont was a heroine too spirited for her age, too gifted to be readily contained within the narrow image of proper Victorian womanhood. Deprived of socially acceptable outlets for her vigorous talents, she sought to justify her ambition and drive (and camouflage them even from herself) by channeling them into her husband's career. Nonetheless she would repeatedly be thwarted and misunderstood. Critics called her "General Jessie," and Abraham Lincoln himself branded her a "female politician." In an era that preached the virtues of female piety, domesticity, and dependency, there was little tolerance for a clever, dominant, active woman like Jessie Frémont. "Stay within your proper confines and you will be worshipped," one nineteenth-century clergyman typically warned American women. "Step outside and you will cease to exist."

JESSIE ANN BENTON was born in 1824 at Cherry Grove, her maternal grandparents' prosperous estate in Rockbridge County, Virginia. She was a bright and boisterous child. "I was called 'Tom-boy' she remembered, "and never had an untorn dress." The second of six children, she was (like many others who would become prominent nineteenth-century women) her father's favorite. "We were a succession of girls at first," she explained, "with the boys coming last, and my father gave me early the place a son would have had."

In Washington, where the family lived when Congress was in session, young Jessie regularly accompanied Senator Benton on his political rounds: to the White House to see President Andrew Jackson; to Capitol Hill, where she browsed freely among the books and folios in the Library of Congress. At home, her father personally supervised her studies. He condemned the rote memorization he called "parroting," and encouraged Jessie to speculate and ask questions. Pinpointing her predominant mental trait, he nicknamed her "Imagination." Her mother, noting Jessie's penchant for causes, called her "Don Quixote."

Long stays in frontier St. Louis, Senator Benton's political base, further widened Jessie's horizons. There she absorbed her father's consuming interest in western exploration as she listened, wide-eyed, to the Indians, mountain men, frontier soldiers, and Santa Fe traders who came to talk with Benton about the scarcely known land that lay between St. Louis and the Pacific.

By the time she reached adolescence, Jessie was witty and outspoken, with a fresh charm—what an admirer called a "wild strawberry flavor"—that attracted a swarm of suitors. Despite her objections, her parents packed her off to Miss English's Female Seminary, a fashionable girls' boarding school in Georgetown, to be molded into a proper young lady. Predictably Jessie rebelled, cutting off her long dark hair in protest, then begging her father to allow her to study with him at home. But Senator Benton, horrified by her jagged mop of hair, let her down. While he had delighted in her spirit and energy when she was a child, now even he expected her to conform.

It was at this crisis point in her development that Jessie met John Charles Frémont, a handsome army surveyor who was as impulsive, imaginative and rebellious as she. There was, as John himself would say later, "no room for reason" in their headlong romance.

John Frémont was the illegitimate first son of Jean Charles Fremon (later the "t" and the accent were added), a French emigré who taught dancing and language in Richmond, and Anne Whiting Pryor, a well-born Virginia woman caught in a passionless marriage with an elderly husband. When their liaison was discovered by Pryor's husband in 1811, the two lovers had run off together in a desperate bid for happiness. John was born two years later in Savannah, Georgia.

John Frémont's boyhood was deeply insecure. His father died when he was five. Money was a constant problem, and his mother was forced to take in boarders. He grew up an outsider, with both the freedom and anxiety that brought. A part of him yearned for acceptance and for the stability of normal family life. Yet inevitably, he felt resentful toward a society that branded him a bastard. He become a loner, skeptical of rules and deeply

This article is based on the author's research for her full-length biography, Jessie Benton Frémont, *published this past spring by Franklin Watts.*

Jessie Benton Frémont posed in 1856 for this portrait by artist Thomas Buchanan Read. In that year she came close to becoming the nation's first lady when her husband John ran as the Republican party's first presidential candidate. Jessie took an active role in the campaign, inspiring women to begin attending political rallies.

COURTESY OF THE SOUTHWEST MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

"Being so fathered, and so husbanded, should I not be

Young lieutenant and western surveyor John Charles Frémont "husbanded" Jessie. John saw in her more than was required of the usual Victorian woman; he noted that "She had inherited from her father his grasp of mind, comprehending with a tenacious memory." And John, ostracized from the day of his illegitimate birth, found a wife who shared some of his qualities of temperament—passion, impulsiveness, and the inner strength necessary to disregard social conventions.

COURTESY OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY, SACRAMENTO

wary of authority, relishing his independence and cautious of sharing his feelings.

In 1838, when Frémont took a job with the United States Corps of Topographical Engineers, he found work that suited his roving temperament. In two successive expeditions to the upper Missouri and Mississippi rivers, he distinguished himself as the assistant to the eminent French scientist-explorer Joseph N. Nicollet. By late 1839, he was in Washington, helping to prepare a map of their explorations. It was at this point that the young explorer first met Senator Benton, who was vitally interested in westward expansion, and then Benton's daughter Jessie.

Inevitably, the Bentons opposed their daughter's romance. Doubtless they felt the radiant and clever Jessie could make a far better match than with a penniless army surveyor of dubious family background. But nothing could deter the young lovers. On October 18, 1841, Jessie, seventeen, and John, twenty-eight, were secretly married. "It is a sad & distressing business," pronounced a scandalized Benton cousin when he heard the news. "I anticipated nothing else from her ungovernable passions."

THOMAS BENTON was furious at the young couple, and for a period he banished them from the house. But at heart he was a warm and generous man. Eventually he came to accept John into the family and then to promote his career. In early 1842, the powerful senator saw to it that his new son-in-law was appointed to head the first in a series of exploring expeditions to the West that would make him famous.

When John headed west in May 1842 to explore the scarcely known Oregon Trail as far as South Pass in the Wyoming Rockies, Jessie, pregnant with their first child, was left behind to wait—a role she would repeat many times, and one that she would always find frustrating. But when John returned six months later and began the government report that would describe the expedition to the American public, she unexpectedly found what she called her "most happy life work."

At first John tried to write the report on his own. But "the horseback life, the sleep in the open air" had unfitted him for "the indoor work of writing," as Jessie tactfully put it, and he developed headaches and nosebleeds. Just as he was ready to give up, Jessie intervened, suggesting that he describe the journey to her and she write down the narrative. The result, published six months later, was a unique collaboration. A vivid adventure story—of buffalo hunts, encounters with Indians, and the exploits of Frémont's then-unknown scout Kit Carson—was woven into the description of the route and its flora, fauna, climate, and geology. Printed by Congress and excerpted in countless newspapers, the Frémonts' first report was an immediate popular success.

stronger than my sex." Portia in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*; lines frequently quoted by Jessie Frémont

John Frémont set out on a second and far more ambitious expedition in the spring of 1843. His instructions were to survey the Oregon Trail as far as the lower Columbia River, then return east by the same route. He reached Fort Vancouver as planned, but, disregarding orders for the return journey, turned south into unexplored Nevada, and then led his twenty-five-man party on a daring, month-long winter trek over the frozen Sierra Nevada into Mexican-held California. It was August 1844 before the explorer finally returned east, "thin, brown, and hungry," as Jessie described him.

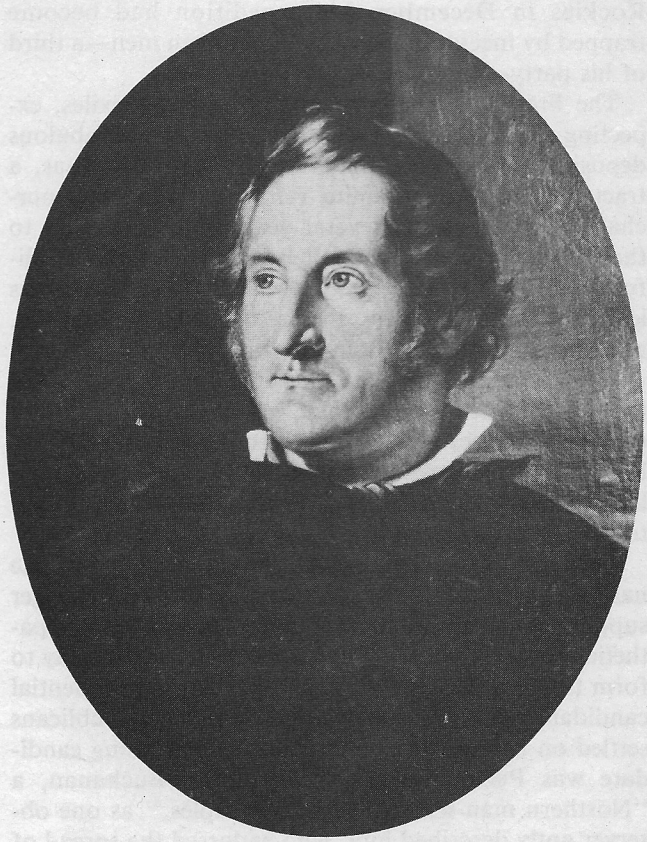
The report that he and Jessie wrote together that winter has become a classic in the literature of exploration. In engrossing detail, they described the expedition's journey to the Oregon region. But from the start their focus was California, for John had returned inspired by it. Their dramatic account of the perilous Sierra crossing—"rock upon rock," "snow upon snow"—and the descent into verdant California captured the public imagination. More than any other publication of its time, the report inspired Americans to head west, guided, as one pioneer said, "only by the light of Frémont's travels."

In May 1845, Frémont once more headed West, this time on his fateful third expedition to California. In June 1846 he joined American settlers in the Bear Flag Revolt against Mexican rule, then led the California Battalion in the American takeover that followed. But he soon became embroiled in a dispute between navy commodore Robert Stockton and late-arriving army general Stephen Watts Kearny, who both claimed supreme authority in California. When Frémont rashly sided with Stockton, his fate was sealed. Kearny marched him east in disgrace to face a court-martial.

Jessie rushed to intercede for her husband through President James Polk, but she was powerless to affect the course of events. Even Senator Benton, who defended his son-in-law in the sensational trial that followed, failed to extricate him. Judged guilty of mutiny, disobedience, and conduct prejudicial of order and discipline, Frémont became the scapegoat of what was at heart a quarrel between the army and navy.

Jessie was devastated by the court-martial, especially when the baby she had carried during the long and wearing trial died three months after its birth. President Polk decreed that the explorer be allowed to resume his duties in consideration of his "meritorious and valuable services," but John, proud and bitter, resigned from the army instead, determined to leave the East and make a new life for himself and his family in California. Jessie reluctantly agreed.

In the fall of 1848, John set out on his fourth journey into the wilderness, a privately-financed expedition seeking an all-weather railway route from St. Louis to California. Jessie promised to join him in San Francisco in the spring.



Jessie was "fathered" by the arrogant, flamboyant, brilliant Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. In his prime he was a firebreathing advocate of Jacksonian democracy and western expansion; in his declining years a prophet of civil war who suffered defeat because of his opposition to the spread of slavery. Early in her life, Jessie became her father's "companion and friend," capturing "the place a son would have had." This portrait, her husband's, and Jessie's own dominated her Los Angeles home.

COURTESY OF THE SOUTHWEST MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

"Woman's true greatness consists in rendering others useful, rather than in being directly useful herself, to make others seen and known, and their influence felt."

Dr. William Alcott: *The Young Wife, or Duties of Woman in the Marriage Relationship* (1837)

"Waiting" was all Jessie could do while her trailblazer husband John conducted three ambitious expeditions (1842, 1843, 1845) to the West. But when John returned home, Jessie vicariously lived his adventures by writing narrative accounts of the journeys as he described them to her. These unique collaborations by the husband-and-wife team were immediate popular successes. They gained for John not only fame, but the respect that had earlier escaped him. Much of that reputation became tarnished, however, when he was court-martialed for involvement in a dispute between army and navy leaders during the American conquest of California. In the W.H.D. Koerner painting opposite, Frémont leads explorers and settlers from Sonoma to Monterey during his fateful third expedition.

IN MARCH 1849, just as news of gold in California spread across the nation, Jessie and six-year-old Lily set out for San Francisco by way of New York and Panama. The journey was an ordeal—both frightening and fascinating—as mother and daughter traveled to Chagres in a steamer crowded with gold-seekers, then by dugout canoe and muleback across the hot, damp isthmus. Stranded in Panama City for two months with thousands of argonauts waiting for passage to California, Jessie came down with a dangerous tropical fever. Somehow, she survived it all; and on June 4, 1849, she and Lily reached San Francisco.

For John Frémont, too, the journey west had been a harrowing one. Seeking a pass across the Colorado Rockies in December, his expedition had become trapped by incessant snowstorms, and ten men—a third of his party—had perished.

The Frémonts had gone to California as exiles, expecting to settle on a ranch. But that summer fabulous deposits of gold were discovered at Las Mariposas, a tract of land near Yosemite Valley that John had purchased, sight unseen, several years before. To add to their good fortune, in the fall John was elected as California's first senator. Barely a year after the Frémonts left the East in bitterness, they returned to Washington, armed with both wealth and political power.

Their triumph was brief, however, for Frémont drew the short senate term and then was defeated—in part by proslavery forces—when he ran for re-election the following year. Meanwhile, in Missouri, Thomas Benton lost his long-held senate seat because of his opposition to the spread of slavery.

Throughout the next decade, slavery would dominate national politics. Many northerners could no longer support Whig or Democratic party candidates sympathetic to slavery, and by 1854 some had broken away to form the new Republican Party. Seeking a presidential candidate with a national reputation, the Republicans settled on John Charles Frémont. The opposing candidate was Pennsylvania senator James Buchanan, a "Northern man with Southern principles," as one observer aptly described him, who endorsed the spread of slavery into the western territories.

To many northerners the "Frémont and Jessie" campaign, as it quickly became known, was a great moral crusade against slavery. The enthusiasm for Jessie herself was unprecedented; never before had a woman been featured in a political campaign. Republicans warbled "Oh, Jessie is a Sweet, Bright Lady" (to the tune of "Comin' through the Rye") and "Our Noble Jessie, the Flower of the Land." They sported ribbons and buttons proclaiming "Frémont and our Jessie" or "Jessie's Choice." Women wore muslin dresses in violet, her favorite color, and named their babies Jessie Ann.

Inspired by Jessie's role, ordinary women for the first time began attending political rallies. Abraham Lincoln, speaking for Frémont in Illinois, was surprised to count seventy mothers with babies at one campaign event. In Buffalo, New York, a reporter noted what he called "a new feature . . . 400 ladies" among the cheering spectators. Women's suffrage leaders, who had begun their campaign for the vote just eight years before, were enthusiastic about Frémont—and even more so about Jessie. "What a shame *women* can't vote!" declared abolitionist Lydia Maria Child. "We'd carry 'our Jessie' into the White House on our shoulders, wouldn't we?"

Jessie worked tirelessly behind the scenes, supervising John's correspondence and helping to write a campaign biography. Opponents were quick to exploit her unusual role, even suggesting she might be "the real candidate" for the presidency. "At a Frémont rally in New Hampshire," reported the *Washington Union*, "one of the banners bore the inscription 'John and Jessie' and another ignored poor John altogether by the inscription 'Jessie for the White House.' It is evident," the newspaper concluded indignantly, "that our opponent fully sympathizes with the woman's rights movement."

In the South the campaign against Frémont was especially brutal. The opposition branded him a "Frenchman's bastard" and spread stories of rumored love af-

Suggested additional reading: Jessie Benton Frémont *by Pamela Herr (Franklin Watts, 1987);* Frémont: Explorer for a Restless Nation *by Ferol Egan (Doubleday, 1977); and* The Expeditions of John Charles Frémont *edited by Donald Jackson and Mary Lee Spence (three volumes, University of Illinois Press, 1970-84).*

COURTESY OF RUTH KOERNER OLIVER

fairs and purported secret Catholicism. Even more painful for Jessie was her own father's defection from the Frémont camp. Despite his opposition to slavery, Thomas Benton campaigned against John, arguing that the victory of a candidate supported only by the North would bring civil war. Jessie, caught between the two most important men in her life, barely managed to avoid a permanent break with her father.

The election, held on November 4, 1856, was heartbreakingly close. Frémont swept New England, New York, and the upper midwest. But his drive faltered critically in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana. Overall, Buchanan won 1.8 million votes; Frémont nearly 1.4 million. It was a stunning display for a new party running its first presidential candidate, but it was not enough to reach the White House.

SHORTLY AFTER THE ELECTION, campaign aide John Bigelow became convinced that John Frémont had "debauched" a household maid. Jessie may not have believed, or even heard, the story, but during the next several months she suffered from a depression she could not escape. Her old rapport with her father had been shaken, and her relationship with her husband had changed as well. After fifteen years of marriage, the passionate intensity had seeped away. John had become more remote, his natural reserve heightened by the bitterness of the campaign. In the spring of 1857, while John headed for California to attend to his Las Mariposas mines, Jessie chose to go to Europe with the children.

The separation clarified her feelings. Whatever her suspicions, fears, or disappointments, Jessie missed her husband desperately. "Love me in memory of the old times when I was so dear to you," she wrote from France in July 1857. "I love you now much more than I did then."

When Jessie returned to New York in the fall, John, back from California, urged that the whole family accompany him to Las Mariposas. Although Jessie was reluctant to leave her father, who was now severely ill, she was nevertheless determined to be with her husband.

CULVER PICTURES, INC., NEW YORK CITY

John Frémont, with Jessie by his side, entered the national political arena with his 1856 selection as the new Republican party's presidential candidate. This contemporary political cartoon contrasts the youthful vitality of John and "our Jessie," as she was called, with the "Old Fogyism" of Democratic nominee James Buchanan. Despite the couple's popularity, Frémont lost to Buchanan in a close race.

The Frémont family—which now included three children—spent the next two years at remote Las Mariposas, struggling to make the enterprise profitable despite mounting debts, lawsuits, and unscrupulous associates who hampered their efforts. Jessie gamely made the best of frontier life, but as daughter Lily later said, "She was not interested in mines, horses, or chickens."

Nevertheless, in the isolation of Las Mariposas, John and Jessie drew closer together. John, in a rare burst of feeling, called her his "best ally." Jessie, in turn, wrote to a woman friend of her husband's new domesticity: "He takes part in & likes all the details of our household. . . . No 'wild turkey' left. It's so easy to take care of children when two help. . . . Now we share & share and he is far happier for it. As for me, you need no telling how satisfied my craving heart is."

In the spring of 1860, the Frémonts moved to San Francisco, where Jessie, creating an informal salon, encouraged the work of the brilliant Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King (who called her a "superb woman") and the promising young writer Bret Harte. In January 1861, with civil war threatening, John went to England to raise capital for Las Mariposas, now more than a million dollars in debt. Restless and lonely in California, Jessie was relieved, almost exhilarated, when war broke out in April and her husband was appointed a major general in the Union Army. "I am so glad I am going into an atmosphere where dollars and cents are not the first object," she said.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN named Frémont commander of the Western Division of the Union Army, with headquarters in St. Louis. There Jessie became her husband's chief aide, attending to his secret correspondence, participating in staff meetings, and screening visitors. Never so alive as when she could channel her

"Ye friends of Freedom, rally now, And push the cause along: We'll give 'em Jessie, When we rally at the polls."

Republican campaign song, 1856

energy into action, she found it "the most wearing and most welcome work" of her life. But many observers, shocked that a woman would play such a role, branded her "General Jessie."

St. Louis in the summer of 1861 was a tense, bitterly divided city, tenuously held by a small Union force. General Frémont's assignment was made immensely difficult by inadequate supplies, troops, and funds, as well as by the constant guerrilla warfare of the state's numerous Confederate sympathizers. Barely one month after his arrival, Frémont made a fateful decision. With Jessie's full support, he issued a sensational proclamation freeing the slaves of Missouri rebels. He hoped by this action to force the rebels to give up their resistance and return to their homes to save their property.

Northern abolitionists hailed this first emancipation proclamation enthusiastically, but President Lincoln, still attempting by a moderate stance to keep the border states loyal, directed Frémont to revoke it. At this point, convinced of the rightness of her husband's decree, Jessie rushed to the nation's capital to defend his views in a dramatic confrontation with the president.

Lincoln received her cooly. As Jessie forcefully presented the arguments for immediate emancipation, he scarcely listened. The purpose of the war, he lectured her, was to preserve the Union and "the Negro has nothing to do with it." The president barely concealed his anger, remarking, "You are quite a female politician."

Although Jessie was thoroughly knowledgeable about affairs in Missouri, Lincoln, like most men of his time, was unable to take a woman seriously. "I had to exercise all the awkward tact I have to avoid quarreling with her," he told an aide later. Jessie in turn observed: "Strange, isn't it, that when a man expresses a conviction fearlessly, he is reported as having made a trenchant and forceful statement, but when a woman speaks thus earnestly, she is reported as a lady who has lost her temper."

Two months later, Frémont was relieved of his command amid charges of inefficiency, corruption and insubordination—charges that Lincoln may more easily have believed because Frémont was now his chief political rival within the Republican party. Jessie was bitter. To her, Frémont had become the leader of a great popular movement to free the slaves, a movement thwarted by petty politicians like Lincoln. The president, she told friends, was "an ass." Eager to vindicate her husband, she wrote her first book under her own name. Entitled *The Story of the Guard*, it described the heroic actions of a controversial guard unit under Frémont's command; indirectly and with subtle skill, it also defended his Missouri tenure.

During the next several years, John Frémont would serve as a rallying point for idealistic Northerners impatient with Lincoln's seeming softness toward slavery. But as he brooded over past injustices, John grew increasingly cynical. More and more he surrounded himself with dubious associates—sleazy businessmen and political opportunists. Many former supporters came to suspect that he was motivated more by ambition than idealism. By the time the Civil War ended, Frémont's political career was virtually over.

AFTER THE WAR Jessie retreated to Pocaho, a luxurious hundred-acre estate on the Hudson River that the Frémonts purchased in 1865. But with her daughter and two sons growing up and her husband continuing to travel on business, she was lonely. Her pampered life cramped her active temperament and stifled her natural energy. And although John had finally sold Las Mariposas, he was irresistibly drawn into other risky and dubious enterprises.

In 1869 the Frémonts traveled to Europe in style, but in France John was charged with misrepresenting the bonds of his Memphis and El Paso railroad to the French public. "Frémont's name stinketh in Paris," an observer reported. In Washington, congressional critics claimed that Frémont had reaped more than a million dollars in commissions on the venture, although only three miles of track were ever laid. The scandal began his financial ruin. Unscrupulous business partners and the panic of 1873 completed it. By the mid-1870s, the Frémonts had lost virtually everything, including Pocaho and most of their possessions.

At this point, Jessie, now aged fifty, took up her pen to support the family. During the next twenty years she churned out a series of reminiscences and children's stories—"harmless puddings" she called them—carefully styled for Victorian parlor consumption. Although her writing became the family's most steady source of income, like most nineteenth-century women she played down her work, dismissing it as a hobby that happened to pay.

By now John Frémont was a defeated man. Ashamed and humiliated, he retreated further into himself. Although he depended on Jessie's love and devotion, he must have found it hard at times to face this strong, energetic, resourceful woman who seemed to believe in him more than he did in himself.

During these years Jessie never doubted, at least publicly, John's essential innocence in the scandals and failures that rained upon him. To her, he remained a hero, "more great in his silent acceptance of undeserved calamity than in the days men praised him." Her love for her husband had become almost maternal. Although she scrupulously preserved the outward forms of obeisance to "the General," as she proudly called him, the

Continued on page 55

What seems in retrospect a natural, even an irresistible subject for painters, engravers, and lithographers, in its day either perplexed artists—or bored them.

Picturing the Constitution

by Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely, Jr.

It was a scene second only in historical importance and interest to that of the Declaration of Independence. And I felt assured that if honestly and earnestly painted, it need borrow no interest from imaginary curtain or column, gorgeous furniture or allegorical statue.

So spoke a famous mid-nineteenth-century artist on the brink of painting a canvas that would eventually hang in the United States Capitol to commemorate what he considered to be the second-most-important document of American history. The first, of course, is memorably celebrated by John Trumbull's Capitol Rotunda painting of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence.

It may seem odd that as late as the 1860s no one had yet pictured the Constitutional Convention of 1787 for the Capitol—or for the American people. But no one had, at least not in a memorable icon of a painting like Trumbull's, which could be copied in popular engraved or lithographed form for Americans to frame and hang in their parlors.

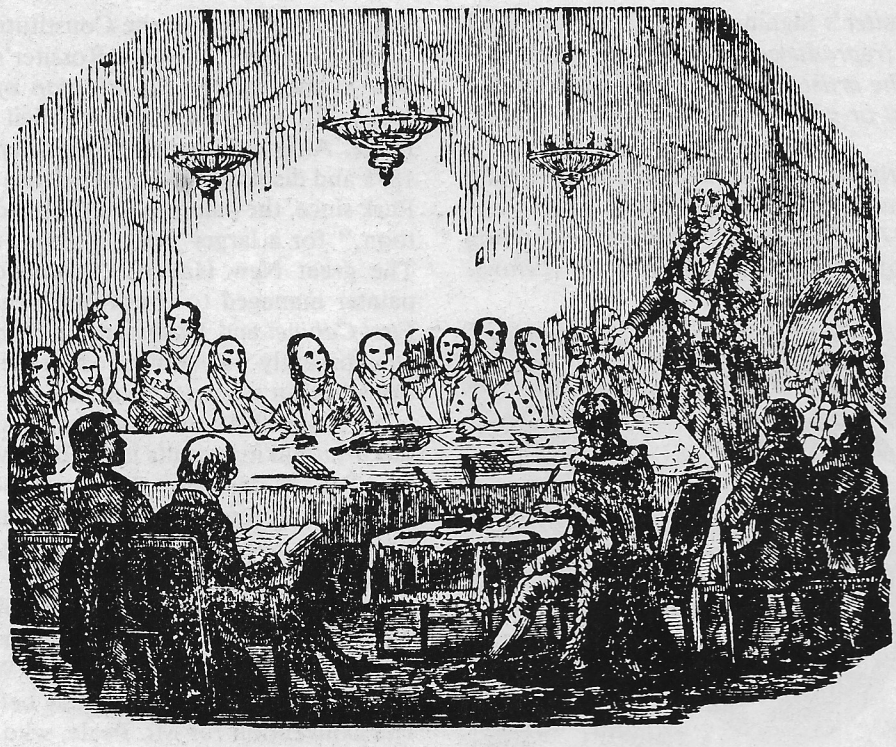
Nor would the void be filled in the 1860s by Francis B. Carpenter, the artist previously quoted, for what he was about to depict was *not* the framing of the Constitution but *The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation*!

During the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation achieved briefly the iconographic status never enjoyed by the Constitution, and equalled only by the Declaration of Independence. Dozens of popular lithographs (which seem uninspiring today) reproduced the obscurely legalistic prose of the Emancipation Proclamation for enthusiastic print-buyers during and immediately after the Civil War. And Carpenter's painting, destined to hang in the Capitol, would be faithfully copied in what became probably the most popular and successful Lincoln print of all time.

But the Constitution, though it survived the Civil War and the threat of secession, afterwards seemed no more popular as an icon than it had been before. Hard as it is to believe today—amidst the festivities surrounding the Constitutional Bicentennial—the landmark convention and document that gave America its time-tested system of government suffered a disastrous career as an icon. What seems in retrospect a natural, even an irresistible subject for painters, engravers, and lithographers, in its day apparently either perplexed artists—or bored them.

Consider that the Capitol Rotunda—one of America's great public art galleries—boasts a series of heroic paintings purporting to illustrate all of the key incidents of early American history. The Declaration of Independence is one subject, of course, and so are such arcane events as the baptism of Pocahontas. But the Constitution is nowhere to be found among them.

To be sure, one *can* find tributes to the Constitution in the Capitol art collection, but not without searching literally high and low for them. *Justice*, an 1817 plaster relief sculpture in a niche above the old Supreme Court Chamber, features a winged, naked figure clutching the Constitution. A companion statuary group high above the old House of Representatives includes a figure of "Liberty" clutching a scroll which is supposed to be the Constitution. The marble copy of Luigi Persico's 1825-28 relief frieze, higher up still on the building's central pediment, includes a distant figure clutching a Constitutional scroll. And a sculpted sketch of the Constitution lies at the base of Horatio Stone's 1868 statue of Alexander Hamilton.



Most eighteenth-century representations of the Constitutional Convention were crude woodcuts like the book illustration above.

But what was once perhaps the Capitol's most intriguing tribute to the document is there no more. When William Wetmore Story created his famous 1883 seated bronze of Chief Justice John Marshall for the grounds outside, he added a large base on which he sculpted an allegorical frieze called *Minerava Dictating the Constitution to Young America*. When the statue was later moved to the Supreme Court Building, it proved too tall for its new, more modest surroundings. The base and *Minerva* were removed and stored away.

Astonishingly, the Capitol did not acquire and place on display a major painting relating to the Constitution until 1940—more than a century-and-a-half after the Constitutional Convention. *Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States*, the work of illustrator Howard Chandler Christy, seems almost an afterthought, hanging as it does today in a rather remote corner of the House wing.

This year the Constitution, not the Declaration or Emancipation Proclamation, occupies center stage in magazine articles, television programming, civic celebration—and, of course, pictures. The Christy painting has been adopted by Hofstra University, New York, as its 1987 advertising logo, and has even made it to the cover of this year's Richmond, Virginia, telephone directory. *Newsweek* commissioned artist Mark Hess to do a new painting of the Convention for its special Constitution issue. And perhaps the only truly great Constitution painting, Junius Brutus Stearns' 1856 oil, *George Washington Addressing the Constitutional Convention* [see pages 38-39 of the Summer 1987 *American History Illustrated*], has been reproduced countless times in recent months.

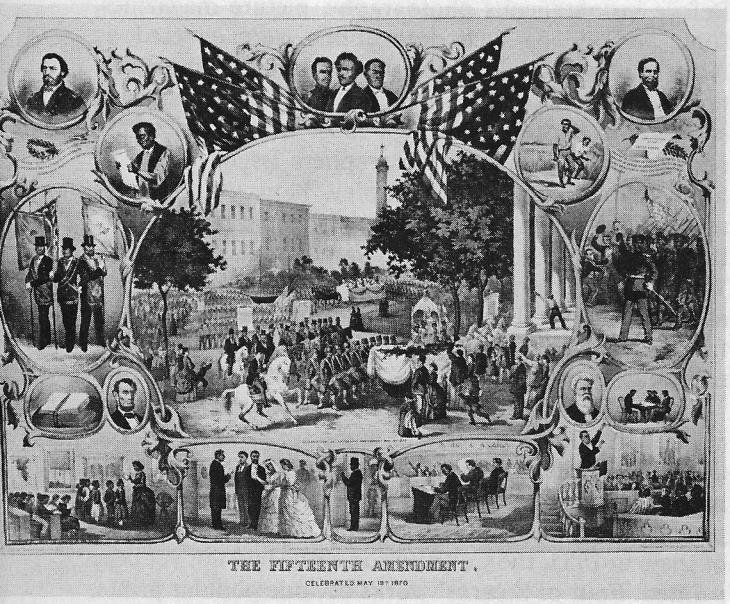
Interest in the Constitution has apparently taken so long to manifest itself because, as one historian has pointed out, the Constitution emerged "both slowly and inconclusively" as a crucial American symbol. Odd indeed for a document that one modern political leader calls "our ultimate solvent of values," our "civic catechism." In fact, to describe the Constitution's emergence as a cultural icon as "slow" and "inconclusive" is certainly too generous. It simply never emerged at all.

In no medium is this mystifying invisibility more glaring—and more baffling—than in popular prints. Before instantaneous photography, picture magazines, film, and video, such decorations were coveted by Americans and displayed by them at home as enthusiastically as today's picture buyers pin up movie star and sports hero posters. Through most of the nineteenth century, engravers and lithographers issued prints of historical events for such display. However primitive and rigid such group scenes appear to the modern eye, in their time they were widely popular—even beloved. Trumbull's *Declaration* canvas, for example, would be adapted by several generations of printmakers. No such fate awaited any of the few paintings created to commemorate the Constitution.

Junius Brutus Stearns' superb canvas is a case in point. Created as an afterthought for a series of oils depicting events in George Washington's life, it was perhaps the best of the lot. Unfortunately, when the French printmakers Coupil & Co. contracted to reproduce all of them in 1855, the Constitution scene had not yet been painted. Four of Stearns' works became popular prints,

Thomas P. Rossiter's Signing of the Constitution of the United States *(reproduced in detail, opposite page) is a study the artist made during the 1860s for a now-lost or never-completed larger painting.*

The Constitution (or, at least part of it) finally received widespread public attention with publication during the 1870s of lithographic prints celebrating ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment (below).



but not the fifth, not the Constitution.

Another work, Thomas Rossiter's ca. 1860-70 scene, *The Signing of the Constitution of the United States* [page 33], similarly failed to elicit any prints for the home. Although loaned to the City of Philadelphia in 1875 and displayed in Independence National Historical Park since, the painting is unfinished, a sketch, or "cartoon," for a larger work. Rossiter never completed it. The great New Haven, Connecticut-born historical painter managed to churn out scenes of *Washington's First Cabinet* and *Washington's Entry into Trenton*. But he apparently was uninspired by the notion of adding a Constitution scene to his series.

An exhaustive search into the archives of early American printmaking results in the discovery of a handful of so-called "Constitution" prints. But they are few in number and seem to have failed to attract much interest when they were published, judging by their obscurity today.

However, the gifted Philadelphia artist Charles Willson Peale did create a print from life during the time of the convention. As George Washington noted in his diary on July 3, 1787: "Sat before the meeting of The Convention for Mr. Peale, who wanted my picture to make a print of Mezzotint by." Peale's motives for the project were clear. "I hope I shall get something in return for my great Expense of time and labour," he wrote. But his mezzotint engraving, *His Excel: G. Washington Edq: L.L.D. Late Commander in Chief of the Armies of the United States of America & President of the Convention of 1787*, apparently proved a failure. Framed copies were originally offered at two-thirds of a dollar and were soon being discounted at "below the London prices." Conceived as the first in a "collection of portraits of illustrious Personages," the Washington painting remained the only print ever offered in the series. Peale had botched a golden opportunity to produce the definitive print of the president of the convention, contributing what is at best an ordinary portrait that understandably failed to attract an audience.

Similarly, an engraving from around 1800, entitled *Washington Giving the Laws to America*, apparently met an equally indifferent response from the picture-buying public. Although Washington is clearly shown holding a book marked, *The American Constitution*, the unknown engraver dressed him in a Roman toga, seated him on a throne, and drew him practically bald, Caesar-like. The addition of trumpeting cherubs, half-naked citizens lounging in the foreground, Independence Hall floating on a cloud on the horizon, and other bizarre details probably contributed to the print's obscurity.

Connecticut printmaker Amos Doolittle's 1789 engraving, *Display of the United States of America*, can be considered a "Constitution" print as well. The large picture cleverly suggests the unification of the states by presenting a central portrait of Washington surrounded by a ring of fifteen interlocking circles, each containing the seal and name of a different state. At the upper right

COURTESY OF INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

COURTESY OF THE ARCHITECT OF THE U.S. CAPITOL

The conspicuous absence of a major Constitution-related painting in the Capitol was finally remedied in 1940 when Congress purchased Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States *by Howard Chandler Christy (above) for display in the east stairway of the House wing.*

is the notation: "The Present Constitution was formed by the Grand Convention held at Philadelphia Sept. 17th 1787." But Washington is identified in the caption encircling his portrait not as the presiding officer of the Convention, but as "President of the United States . . . Protector of his COUNTRY and the Supporter of the Rights of MANKIND." That description provides another clue to the Constitution's failure as an icon: its most popular personality, Washington, was soon elected president, at which time his connection to the Constitution became secondary to his new stature as chief executive. Conceivably it was this enlargement of Washington's reputation that, ironically, helped doom to footnote status in American iconography the convention he had chaired.

Until the Civil War, these three prints comprised virtually all of the graphic tributes to one of the most important documents in American history.

Other Constitution illustrations were few and so primitive they do not even qualify as popular prints for the home. They were made for use in the earliest bound books of the new American nation—charming enough, to be sure, but perplexing: why did America's *least* talented printmakers illustrate the Constitution while so many of the country's *most* talented ignored it?

As early as 1788 an unknown engraver contributed a woodcut of *The Grand Convention* for the cover of *Weatherwise's Federal Almanack*. Crude as it is, the picture features a surprisingly accurate view of the interior of the State House, strongly suggesting that its artist had seen and sketched it, although surely not while the delegates sat, for he portrays them seated against opposite walls, Parliament-style. Another "almanack," published in Boston the following year, features a woodcut called *The Rising Glory of the AMERICAN EMPIRE*, depicting winged cherubs draping thirteen symbolic pillars, while an angel heralds the adoption of the Constitution. And an 1823 history text features Elkanah Tisdale's woodcut, *Convention at Philadelphia*, an almost intimate scene of Washington presiding over a cluttered room filled with hard-working delegates.

It remains an unsolved mystery of American art that

The Constitution emerged "both slowly and inconclusively" as an American symbol.

these simple, unschooled efforts, along with the minuscule number of polished popular prints, constituted virtually the entire archive of Constitutional graphic arts published between 1787 and 1865.

Certainly the Constitution is not a revolutionary document, at least not in the sense the Declaration of Independence was, and its language is hardly as stirring as Thomas Jefferson's world-shaking prose in the Declaration. After a memorable preamble sentence, the Constitution writers began the serious business of describing a government, and the prose quickly grew complicated, a little legalistic, and quite dull.

Yet poor prose has never been a barrier to popularity in the United States. Even in the nineteenth century, when common men knew their Shakespeare, and newspapers and popular cartoons could make puns assuming their readers' understanding, a document as dull and dismally written as the Emancipation Proclamation became a full-fledged and genuinely popular icon. Historian Richard Hofstadter has quipped that Lincoln's document was written "with all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading," and it is true that President Lincoln had made it almost deliberately dull in an effort to suggest that emancipation, which many Northerners and almost all Southerners regarded as unconstitutional, *was* a constitutional act within the president's powers as commander-in-chief.

The American people finally emancipated their Constitution from its crippling ties to slavery: the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth made freedmen citizens, and the Fifteenth gave them the franchise. These Reconstruction amendments, ratified, respectively, in 1865, 1868, and 1870, momentarily succeeded where artists and the Founding Fathers had failed: they made the Constitution a genuinely popular icon. Brightly-colored prints celebrating the Fifteenth Amendment suddenly emerged in 1870, finally giving the Constitution, or at least part of it, its shining hour as a visual icon.

Liberty [page 32] links the Emancipation Proclamation with the Fifteenth Amendment and also Abraham Lincoln's image with Ulysses S. Grant's. The latter was president of the United States in 1870, when the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, and it never harmed a president or a candidate (Grant would run again in 1872) to be thought of as carrying out the ideals and programs of the Great Emancipator. The large print also hints that black votes for Grant might be fair return for the Republican Amendment to the Constitution. Other celebrated personalities are antislavery radicals William Lloyd Garrison and Thaddeus Stevens; head of the Freedman's Bureau, General O.O. Howard; and Hiram Revels, who in 1870 became the first black United States Senator, assuming Jefferson Davis' old Mississippi seat.

Grant and Lincoln are also featured, but less prominently, in two lithographs celebrating the Fifteenth Amendment, one published in Baltimore by Metcalf & Clark in 1870 and another published by Thomas Kelly in New York in 1870. Although these prints are also cluttered with many vignettes, the emphasis is clearly different from that of *Liberty*. *Liberty* looks like many essentially political prints, aimed at promoting the fortunes of the active politician, U.S. Grant. The other two prints put blacks, celebrating the Fifteenth Amendment, front and center, and give politicians, white and black, merely supporting roles on the decorative borders. Both celebrate colorfully costumed black Masons, and both champion education for freedmen. Marriage, religion, and the family are also touted in the New York print.

The hint of genuine iconographic popularity suggested by these lithographs reveals that America has had essentially two Constitutions—one that lasted until the Civil War, and an amended version that came after the Civil War and incorporated blacks into the American nation. Blacks were grateful for the new Constitution. When chromolithographer Louis Prang sent black leader Frederick Douglass a print portrait of Senator Revels, the great Douglass replied: "Heretofore, colored Americans have thought little of adorning their parlors with pictures. They have had to do with the stern, and I may say, the ugly realities of life . . . Every colored householder in the land should have one of these portraits in his parlor, and should explain it to his children, as the dividing line between the darkness and despair that overhung our past, and the light and hope that now beams upon our future as people."

It proved to be a false—at least a premature—aspiration, and after 1870 state after southern state was taken over by white Democratic regimes that reversed the gains of Reconstruction. The "new" Constitution was essentially ignored and, ironically, the "old" document resumed its career of iconographic obscurity.

In the rhymed words of the caption that accompanied the primitive woodcut of the *Grand Convention* for *Weatherwise's Almanack*:

> BEHOLD conven'd in firm debate,
> Of high importance to each State;
> Our honour'd fathers . . .

But there would be little else to "behold." It would be impossible for generations of Americans to picture the Constitution. For there would be few such pictures. ★

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Praised by George Washington as a "Specimen of American Ingenuity," Joshua Barney's "Federalist" was a highlight of Maryland's 1788 Constitution ratification celebration.

Pint-Sized Ship of State

by Barbara B. Ryan

LIKE A TOY SHIP. That's how the *Federalist* must have looked among the many other vessels plying the waters of Baltimore harbor on June 1, 1788. The three-masted, ship-rigged vessel resembled those around her in every respect but one—size. She measured only fifteen feet from bow to stern.

The miniature ship, on her way to Annapolis and Mount Vernon under the command of Captain Joshua Barney, had been built by the Baltimore business community to honor Maryland's role in the creation and adoption of the Constitution. Her seven sails symbolized Maryland's pivotal vote (as the seventh among thirteen states to ratify the new plan of government) in giving the majority to the Federalists.

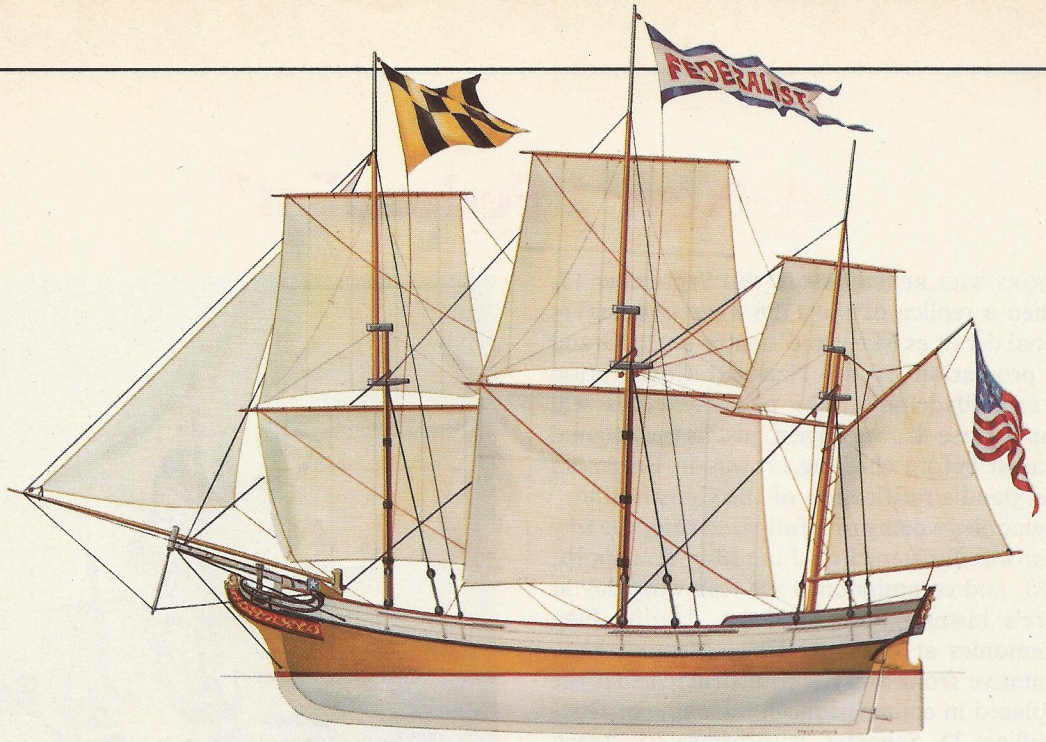
The *Federalist* was literally a pint-sized "ship of state"—the embodiment of a symbol of government dating back to ancient Greece, implying the free exchange of commerce and ideas necessary to the prosperity and development of a nation. These were values especially dear to the ship owners, traders, and sea captains primarily responsible for building the tiny craft. Ever since adoption of the Articles of Confederation in 1781, mariners had experienced firsthand the weaknesses of this loose alliance between the states. An impotent Congress had proven itself incapable of protecting American ships from Barbary pirates, or American sailors from impressment by the British navy. From September 1786 through April of the next year, as the ratification contest occupied Maryland, the mariners had been prominent members of the Federalist camp.

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE, NEW YORK CITY

Their opposition had come from such state leaders as Luther Martin and John Francis Mercer, who, fearful that under the proposed government large states would walk over their smaller neighbors, stubbornly fought against ratification. Both men had been delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787, but they had left before the meeting ended without signing the document. In long-winded speeches that wearied many of his colleagues, Martin had defended state sovereignty, castigating the government that was beginning to emerge as "injurious to my country."

Federalists, however, argued that the Constitution was essential to United States economic and political stability. Among the most vocal of the pro-Constitution supporters was twenty-nine-year-old Joshua Barney, a merchant and seaman with a proud record of achievements in the Continental Navy.* At rally

**Born in Baltimore in 1759, Joshua Barney went to sea at the age of eleven. He assumed his first command at age fifteen, profitably completing a merchant voyage to Europe after the ship's master died in mid-Atlantic. Commissioned an officer in the Continental Navy during the Revolution, Barney distinguished himself in action in the Bahamas; was taken captive three times; and spent a year in an English prison before escaping to France and America. As commander of the privateer* Hyder-Ally *at Cape May in 1782, he defeated a much larger British warship in an action "justly deemed one of the most brilliant that ever occurred under the American flag." Barney served in the French Navy during 1796-1802. During the War of 1812 he commanded American privateers, engineered the flotilla defense of Washington, and was wounded at the Battle of Bladensburg. Barney died in 1818, a veteran of "twenty-six combats, all of which were against the English, and in nearly all of which he was successful."*



after rally, Barney argued on behalf of a government powerful enough to elicit respect from the nations of the world. On one such occasion, an ardent Antifederalist answered Barney's arguments with a tree limb; the speaker carried the bump on his head for the rest of his days.

Confident that the Federalist cause would eventually prevail, Barney and his associates devised the idea of a replica "ship of state" even before Marylanders met to debate ratification of the proposed Constitution. No record survives as to exactly when the craft was begun or completed, but the *Federalist* made her first public appearance in Baltimore on April 9, 1788, immediately following the selection of delegates for Maryland's Ratification Convention. Celebrating the election of a Federalist majority, a procession of several thousand pro-Constitutionalists wound through the city. "The new Ship *Federalist*, 'with Streamers waving in the Wind,' formed Part of this exulting Display," reported the *Maryland Gazette*, "and such was the Mildness of our Clime that during her whole Voyage, she met not a single Antifederal Blast, to ruffle her sails."

Less than three weeks later, on April 28, 1788, the state convention in Annapolis approved the new plan of government, sixty-three to eleven. This vote was the turning point: pro-Constitution states now held the majority, and ratification by only two more would make the charter law. "As soon as it was known in [Baltimore] that the Constitution for the United States of America was ratified, and our Convention dissolved, the Joy of the People was extreme," reported the *Maryland Journal*. "Every Class and Order of Citizens wishing to give some Demonstration of their Feelings, it was agreed to form a grand Procession, expressive of their Satisfaction and the high Importance of the Occasion." Each craft, trade, and business would be represented by a float or play.

"On the morning of the first [of May] the various preparations being completed, the Procession consisting of three thousand People was formed on Philpot's farm, under the Direction of Captains Plunket and Moore," according to the *Journal*. The celebration that followed was, in the words of one observer, "the most interesting Scene ever exhibited in this Part of the World."

Commencing with a seven-gun salvo, the parade moved through the streets of Baltimore and past "a Prodigious Number of Spectators," over a route that carried it from Fells Point to the harbor and then onto the elevation that would thereafter be known as Federal Hill. The order of participants was arranged "promiscuously, Equality being the Basis of the Constitution."

First marched the farmers, displaying their tools and a banner that read "Venerate the Plough." Millers and flour inspectors followed, and French burr millstone makers with a decorated stone "incessantly turning in the Air, on the Axis, by the power of four beautiful Continental Flags."

Butchers, brewers, and distillers followed, and then bakers with a flag showing thirteen loaves, a sheaf of wheat, and the motto "May our Country never want Bread."

Blacksmiths displayed the sentiment "May every Federal Heart Encourage Vulcan's Art," reminding onlookers that "While Industry prevails, we need no foreign Nails."

The house carpenters produced a grand tower "Supported by seven Architects," featuring thirteen each of stories, pillars, arches, pediments, spires and flutes.

Midway in the gala procession marched the city's maritime contingent: pilots, captains, ships' crews, ropemakers, riggers, blockmakers, sailmakers, navigational instrument makers, and chandlers. In the place of honor at their head rolled "The Ship *Federalist*, Joshua Barney, Esq., Commander; Mr. Cooper, First Lieutenant. Completely officered and manned, rigged and sailed; borne on a Carriage drawn by [four] Horses. She displayed the

A New "Federalist"

HISTORY WILL REPEAT ITSELF this September 17, when a replica of the 1788 *Federalist* makes its national debut as Maryland's entry in the Grand Federal procession of the National Constitution Parade in Philadelphia. The new *Federalist* will "sail" on a horse-drawn wagon, just as the original was paraded before cheering crowds in Baltimore after Maryland's ratification of the Constitution.

In ceremonies worthy of a full-sized ship, the tiny *Federalist* was christened on June 13 in Annapolis, Maryland, and commissioned the following day at Baltimore's historic Fort McHenry. During Flag Day ceremonies at the fort, Helen Bentley, U.S. Representative from Maryland, instructed that the ship be placed in commission, in the name of Governor William D. Schaefer, with orders to "teach the values of the U.S. Constitution." Four flags were flown from the *Federalist* during the commissioning ceremony: the 1788 national ensign, the Lord Baltimore flag, the state commissioning flag, and the United States commissioning pennant indicating that the ship is in the active service of the country.

Throughout the next four years the little flagship will travel to Maryland towns, schools, museums, and other events, where costumed crew members will distribute educational materials on the history of the ship, state, and U.S. Constitution. In 1991, the *Federalist* will be retired to a Maryland maritime museum.

Re-creation of the *Federalist* was headed by John Driggs, chairman of the Maryland Federalist Foundation, a nonprofit organization designed to oversee and raise funds for the project. Driggs worked in cooperation with Gregory Stiverson and his staff at the Maryland Office for the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution at the Maryland State Archives.

Melbourne Smith, internationally-known marine designer and artist, created the plans for the ship-rigged* vessel in the summer of 1986. The replica was built during the winter and spring of 1987 by master carver Allen Rawl of Bradshaw, Maryland, assisted by his twenty-three-year-old daughter Laurie, a journeyman shipwright.

Authentically fashioned along eighteenth-century lines, the fifteen-foot hull of the *Federalist* was constructed with scale-sized oak keel and frames, bronze fastenings, Douglas fir planking, and Sitka spruce masts and spars. A carving of the Black-eyed Susan—the Maryland state flower—adorns her billethead, and because the oak is the state tree, oak leaves are carved on the trail board. The colors of the ship—black, buff, red, and white—are Maryland's colors.

Like the historic ship she replicates, the *Federalist* is seaworthy. According to Smith, the little craft handled surprisingly well during trials, generally exhibiting the same characteristics as a full-sized square-rigged vessel. Manned by a crew of two, the *Federalist* is scheduled to demonstrate her sailing qualities at regional boat shows and maritime events during coming months. She is also tentatively slated to recreate Joshua Barney's voyage from Baltimore to Mount Vernon on the two-hundredth anniversary of that trip in June 1988.

The *Federalist* begins her four-year mission this month as a true "ship of state," symbolizing, as Retired Navy chaplain William Gilroy said in his commissioning invocation, "this great state's pride in its part in the ratification of the Constitution." ★

**A sailing vessel square-rigged on all of three or more masts, and usually having jibs, staysails, and a spanker on the aftermost mast.*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE MARYLAND FEDERALIST FOUNDATION, ANNAPOLIS

Flag of the United States, and was fully dressed."*

According to Mary Barney, Joshua Barney's daughter-in-law, the Revolutionary War commander "was honored with a crew of captains, who at his word and the boatswain's pipe went through all the various manoevres of making and taking in sail, to the great delight of the crowded windows, doors, and balconies by which they passed."

Upon reaching Federal Hill, the procession came to a halt, and the *Federalist* dropped anchor. "Being the Seventh Ship in the Line, and having weathered the most dangerous Cape in the Voyage," observed the *Maryland Gazette* writer metaphorically, "she lay to, under Seven Sails . . . throwing out signals, and expecting the arrival of the other Six."

Here another seven-gun salute signaled the next phase in the day's entertainment: an elegant public repast consisting "entirely of the Productions of this country." Thirteen toasts with cider, beer, and nine-and-a-half gallons of peach brandy, closed the feast. The revelers toasted (the):

Majesty of the People
Late Convention
Congress
Seven States which have adopted the Federal Constitution
Speedy Ratification by the remaining Six, without Amendments
George Washington
His Most Christian Majesty, and our other Allies
Virtuous sixty-three of the Maryland Convention
Agriculture, Manufacturies, and Commerce of America
Memory of those who have fallen in Defence of America
Worthy Minority of Massachusetts
May the American Flag be respected in every quarter of the Globe

**Similar replicas took part in ratification celebrations in several other states. Another* Federalist *was a feature of the Charleston, South Carolina, parade on May 27, 1788, while the* Hamilton, *"a frigate fully manned . . . its cannon saluting and receiving salutes," was borne in New York City's pageant in July.*

A Continuance of Unanimity among the Inhabitants of Baltimore-Town.

A splendid bonfire ushered in the evening, and in front of the counting-house "an allegoric transparent Painting, finely illuminated, was exhibited by Mr. Peale." Finally, a grand dance brought the unforgettable day to a close.

In reporting this event the *Journal* determined that "every Part of this variegated, pleasing and august Scene was conducted with the most perfect Regularity, Order and Harmony . . . No gloomy Thought obstructed the finest Expansion of the human Mind! Every eye sparkled, every Heart glowed with Rapture upon this brilliant Occasion."

FOR BALTIMORE, the celebration eventually ended, but a triumphant voyage—this one on real water—still awaited the *Federalist*. A month after the little ship had highlighted the parade, Captain Barney sailed her thirty miles down Chesapeake Bay to Annapolis. "Governor Smallwood met him on the quay," recorded Barney's daughter-in-law, "and honored his arrival with a national salute; and then insisted upon his taking up quarters in the government house: dinners, tea parties, and balls, courted his acceptance from all the principal citizens—and, but that he felt it incumbent upon him to 'pursue his voyage,' he might have passed a month in a continued round of elegant pleasures."

Resuming his journey after several days, Barney continued another sixty miles down the Chesapeake to the mouth of the Potomac River, then turned upstream toward Mount Vernon. Reaching the plantation before breakfast on June 8, he presented the *Federalist* to Constitutional Convention Chairman George Washington, as a gift from the merchants of Baltimore.

The chairman was charmed. He wrote to the merchants:

"To William Smith and Others

Mount Vernon, June 8, 1788

Gentlemen: Captain Barney has just arrived here in the miniature ship called the Federalist; and has done me the honor to offer that beautiful *Curiosity* as a Present to me on your part. I pray you, Gentlemen, to accept the warmest expressions of my sensibility for this *Specimen of American Ingenuity*: in which the Exactitude of the Proportions, the Neatness of the Workmanship, and the Elegance of the Decorations (which make your Present fit to be preserved in a Cabinet of Curiosities) at the same time that they exhibit the Skill and Taste of the Artists, demonstrate that Americans are not inferior to any People whatever in the use of Mechanical Instruments and the Art of Shipbuilding."

Washington invited Barney to stay at Mount Vernon as his guest. The chairman was called away on June 10, but Barney remained for several more days before returning to Baltimore, visiting with Martha Washington and taking her grandson, George Washington Parke Custis, for short cruises on the river.

Just six weeks after Washington received Maryland's unique gift, a ferocious hurricane struck the tidewater region with winds, rain, and high tides. In his diary Washington described the *Federalist*'s destruction: "Thursday, July 24th. Thermometer at 70 in the morning, 71 at noon and 74 at night. A very high No. Et. wind at night, which, this morning, being accompanied with rain, became a hurricane, driving the miniature ship *Federalist* from her moorings, and sinking her, blowing down some trees in the groves and about the houses, loosening the roots, and forcing a greater or lesser degree of their bows and doing other and great mischief to the grain, grass, etca. and not a little to my mill race. In a word it was violent and severe—more so than has happened for many years."

The terrible storm whirled on into the Appalachians, leaving in its wake a trail of devastation—and robbing a future "Cabinet of Curiosities" of a unique artifact: the tiny *Federalist*, tangible expression of the leap of faith by which men of the sea had welcomed the infant Constitution. ★

Avocational historian Barbara B. Ryan researches little-known personalities and events, while operating a 212-year-old bed-and-breakfast inn in Durham, North Carolina.

A Confederate general recalls the last desperate days of the Army of Northern Virginia.

With Lee at Appomattox

by E. Porter Alexander

With his army worn down by nearly four years of war, Confederate General Robert E. Lee's defense of Virginia grew increasingly tenuous during the early months of 1865. When Federal forces laying siege to Petersburg finally broke through on April 1, the very survival of Lee's army was at stake. One of his officers during these desperate days was E. Porter Alexander, a thirty-year-old brigadier general and artillery commander. The following narrative by Alexander, published as "Lee at Appomattox: Personal Recollections of the Break-Up of the Confederacy," first appeared in the April 1902 issue of The Century Magazine.

LOOKING BACK at the situation of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia at the opening of the spring campaign of 1865, it is hard to conceive that any man in it could have failed to realize that its career must soon be brought to a close. To defend Richmond and Petersburg, [the army] was stretched out from the Chickahominy on the left to Five Forks on the right, crossing two rivers, a distance by its shortest roads of over thirty miles, to hold which there were only about fifty thousand men of all arms, and there were virtually no more men left where those came from.

In front of us, in many places within pistol-shot, lay the enemy with about one hundred and thirty thousand men, and with no end of men left at home to be had if needed. Had Union General Ulysses S. Grant chosen, he could have gotten twice as many, for the United States at that time had nearly a million men in arms. And, indeed, up through the Carolinas were marching Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and John M. Schofield, almost unopposed, with nearly ninety thousand more to come upon our flank. Yet the army never seemed to realize at all the drawing near of the inevitable result.

While I cannot recall the faintest conscious doubt of the final success of our cause, one circumstance makes it evident that [the subconscious] had begun to absorb some idea of what was coming.

The circumstance was this: I had some seven hundred dollars in [a] bank in Richmond. One warm day in March [1865], as the air began to feel springlike and balmy, without any conscious thought, I got a friend going into Richmond to draw my Confederate money and invest it in gold. He brought me a ten-dollar gold piece, which I put in my pocket, and thus I saved that much from the wreck.

General Robert E. Lee himself was not yet entirely without hope, and on March 25 actually left his own lines and made a furious and bloody, but unsuccessful, assault upon the enemy's strongly fortified position at

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In a melancholy scene by illustrator Howard Pyle, heartbroken soldiers surround General Robert E. Lee as he returns to Confederate lines after negotiating the surrender of his army at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, on April 9, 1865. "The men crowded around to try to shake his hand or touch his horse," recalled E. Porter Alexander, "and some appealed to him to get us all exchanged and try it again."

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Residents and troops hastily evacuate Richmond on April 3, 1865, following the collapse of Confederate defenses at Petersburg. "The scenes there that night I cannot [adequately] describe," wrote E. Porter Alexander: "The city was lighted up with conflagrations, and six miles southeast . . . could be seen the burning of our little fleet of gunboats."

Fort Stedman,* apparently in the belief that he could still cope with the whole Federal army if he could get them out of their entrenchments. This desperate sortie was thoroughly characteristic of General Lee.

When he first assumed command of the army he came from West Virginia, where there had been no fighting, and some of the Richmond papers assailed him bitterly as vacillating and timid. In conversation with Colonel Ives of President Davis's staff during a ride along the lines, I asked his estimate of Lee. His reply was impressive. Stopping his horse and turning to face me, he said: "Lee is the most audacious officer in either army, Confederate or Federal. He will fight quicker and longer, and take more desperate chances, than any other general this country has ever seen, and you will live to see it." It was a remarkable prediction to have been made before Lee had ever fought a battle. Many of our subsequent battles recalled it to my mind, but none of them more forcibly than this brave effort to destroy a veteran army of nearly thrice his numbers.

My command at this time included, with the field artillery north of the Appomattox, the heavy batteries and torpedo defenses of the James River. The enemy's fleet of ironclads occupied the river a short distance below and would frequently steam up and exchange shots with our long-range guns.

In the latter part of March a lot of torpedoes were prepared to be set adrift at night, arranged to float with the current down among the enemy's vessels, then settle a few feet under water, anchor themselves promiscuously about, and wait for something to run against them. As it would be impossible [for the enemy] to guess how many there were and where they had settled, they would tend to discourage navigation in our direction.

On April 2 I went down into the swamp, where arrangements were being made to launch the torpedoes that night, and spent the whole day in having them filled

**A Union redoubt facing Confederate defenses east of Petersburg, Virginia. Lee suffered nearly four thousand casualties in this, his last offensive of the war.*

with powder and made ready. About sundown I returned to my camp for dinner and there first heard of the events of the previous twenty-four hours at Petersburg. Major General George E. Pickett's division had been captured at Five Forks,* the lines at Petersburg were broken, [and] Lieutenant General A.P. Hill and many other officers were killed—among them Willie Pegram, the brilliant young colonel of artillery, loved and admired throughout the army.

Our men had fought everywhere as well as ever they fought before, and at many points had driven the enemy back with severe losses; but the thin ranks had been overrun at some places, and, as a whole, the integrity of our system of defense was gone. Lieutenant General James Longstreet had arrived with Major General Charles W. Field's division from the north side of the James and had checked the enemy's advance into [Petersburg], but the position could no longer be held. About an hour later orders were received to withdraw everything during the night across the James, abandoning Richmond, and to move southward to Amelia Court House, where we would unite with the forces to be withdrawn from Petersburg.

My command was stretched over many miles, and we had a busy night getting it on the road, spiking and abandoning the heavy guns, and arming as infantry the men who had served them. With heavy hearts we left our beautiful lines, prepared with such care for many months, only to be walked over by the enemy in the morning, without receiving a single shot.

ABOUT MIDNIGHT I rode into Richmond. The scenes there that night I cannot attempt to describe. Troops, trains, and artillery were coming in from the lines and crossing the river by the bridge, while at the same time the city was being evacuated by the government and all its employees, from President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate Congress down to the mechanics in the armories and workshops. In short, about the whole male population was leaving, and a few of the females—all who were able to. I had friends and relatives in each class and made hasty visits to their houses to see if I could render any help. The one thing needful for those who were to remain was to see that they had a few days' provisions on hand; for with the morning would come the enemy, and the little remaining value of Confederate money would pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew.

After seeing what was possible to be done in this line, and taking a hospitable cup of genuine coffee at a house where several weeping ladies were being left by their husbands, I rode down to the bridge to see our batteries as they came by and give them final directions. By that time the city was lighted up with conflagrations, and six miles southeast, at Drewry's Bluff, could be seen the burning of our little fleet of gunboats. The thundering explosions of their magazines were the most tremendous sounds I ever heard, the atmospheric conditions being peculiarly favorable for transmission in our direction.

I think no person in Richmond went to bed that night. Close by the bridge, the Richmond and Danville freight depot, filled with quartermaster and commissary supplies, was burning, and no one was trying to put it out or even looking on; but a few people were carrying off such things as they wished. A very dissipated-looking old Irishwoman was rolling out bales of blankets and packing them into a little coal-cellar under her house. She packed the cellar full, but before daylight the fire reached her and took house, blankets, and all. I helped myself to a new saddle and bridle, and my faithful small darky Charley tied on a side of bacon, which during the next few days well repaid all the trouble it cost. That was the last issue of Confederate rations in which I ever participated.

I do not know to what extent the fires were originally set, if at all, by military order, but I imagine that perhaps orders were given to burn the ordnance storehouses and workshops, and I believe that the fires were purposely spread by a class which always turns up, ready to take advantage of opportunities for plunder. There was no lack of such characters in Richmond that night. Bands of them roamed the business streets, plundering unprotected stores. I was told that a jeweler shot dead one man who broke into his store, and officers of the rear guard who left the city after daybreak reported one man left hanging on a lamp post and two or three other dead bodies lying in the streets. This was probably the work of a provost guard which was about, though I did not see it.

Shortly after daybreak the last of the guns passed, and I went with them, crossing the canal on a bridge already on fire from a burning canal-boat which had floated or been pushed underneath. About sunrise we took our last look back from the hills at the smoking and deserted city, which had been defended so long and so well.

WE MARCHED ALL DAY, and bivouacked at dark near Tomahawk Church, about sixteen miles from Richmond. But while the command rested and slept I was sent upon a reconnaissance of some roads, which kept me in the saddle during the whole night. Early on the 4th the march was resumed, and crossing the Appomattox on a railroad bridge, I camped at night near Amelia Court House, utterly exhausted by sixty hours' incessant work and movement. That night was my last night in a tent. Our headquarters wagon was sent off next morning with a [wagon supply] train which was captured and burned by the Federal cavalry, leaving us nothing but the clothes we wore, and not our best clothes at that.

At Amelia Court House, on the 5th, we joined General Lee and the troops who had come from Petersburg.

The collapse of Pickett's lines at this crossroads west of Petersburg, an action in which he lost over five thousand men, left the way open for a massive Union assault that subsequently crushed Lee's Petersburg defenses.

We had expected to receive rations at this place, but there had been some mistake, and we had to accept the commissary's apologies in their place.

There was here a hurried sort of reorganization of corps, necessary from the death of Hill, the scattered and more or less broken condition of many divisions, and the joining of the local troops from Richmond under Lieutenant General Richard S. Ewell.

Much of the artillery and the trains were started from Amelia Court House off to the right toward Lynchburg, while what was left of the army, with a few selected batteries and battalions of artillery, stripped of all trains and impediments, was to make a break to pass Burkeville and secure our line of retreat to North Carolina, where we would unite with General Joseph E. Johnston.*

About noon I started with General Lee, who went with the head of the column. Only a few miles out, near Jetersville, we struck a considerable body of the enemy, and preparations were rapidly made to give battle. Our cavalry were feeling them in front, and for a while Lee seemed to contemplate an attack with all his force. Then suddenly orders were changed, and Longstreet, with his corps, was turned off to the right and ordered to march with all haste to Rice's Station, where we were to take and hold position until the rest of the army could concentrate upon us.

It was a long and weary all-night march, only about sixteen miles, but equal to double that distance under favorable conditions. There were several false alarms along the lines during the night, and in one of them two of our brigades fired on each other, killing several men—among them one of our finest artillery officers, Major Frank Smith, who had commanded heavy batteries on the James.

Riding ahead of the guns and infantry with my staff, we arrived at Rice's about dawn, when we turned out in the woods to get an hour's sleep and to boil and eat a very tough old hen which we had secured as we came along.

By sunrise we were again in the saddle to examine the locality and select a line of battle on which the troops, as they arrived, were posted. But many of those expected never arrived. The enemy had intercepted our line of march, and a very sharp engagement took place at Sailors' Creek, where Ewell, Major General Custis Lee,** Major General Joseph Kershaw, and about seven thousand men were captured after a fight severe and bloody, but successful on our part until those engaged were surrounded and overwhelmed. General Lee was evidently much worried at the news brought to him of this disaster, and rode back to see if it were possible to save anything. But the enemy was now close to our line of march everywhere; they broke in at various places, got among our trains, and captured and burned many.

Among the commands captured in this way was my own splendid old artillery battalion, now commanded by Colonel Huger. It was peacefully climbing a long hill by a narrow road when Brigadier General George Armstrong Custer, with a brigade of cavalry, came charging down upon them. Three of the leading guns were unlimbered and fired two or three rounds of cannister upon the Federals when they swarmed over everything. Captain O.B. Taylor, of the leading battery, was called on to surrender but answered with defiance and orders to his cannoneers to continue firing, whereupon he was shot dead. Huger was captured after shooting through the cheek a major who first invited him to surrender, in the ceremonious and complimentary language customary on such occasions. A second invitation coming from a cavalryman, who came up and held a carbine to his head, was accepted. But the major bore no malice and that night came to thank Huger for a delightful "furlough wound." Custer and Huger had been friends at West Point, and having captured him, Custer took him along all day, as he said, "to let you see how I am going to take you fellows in."

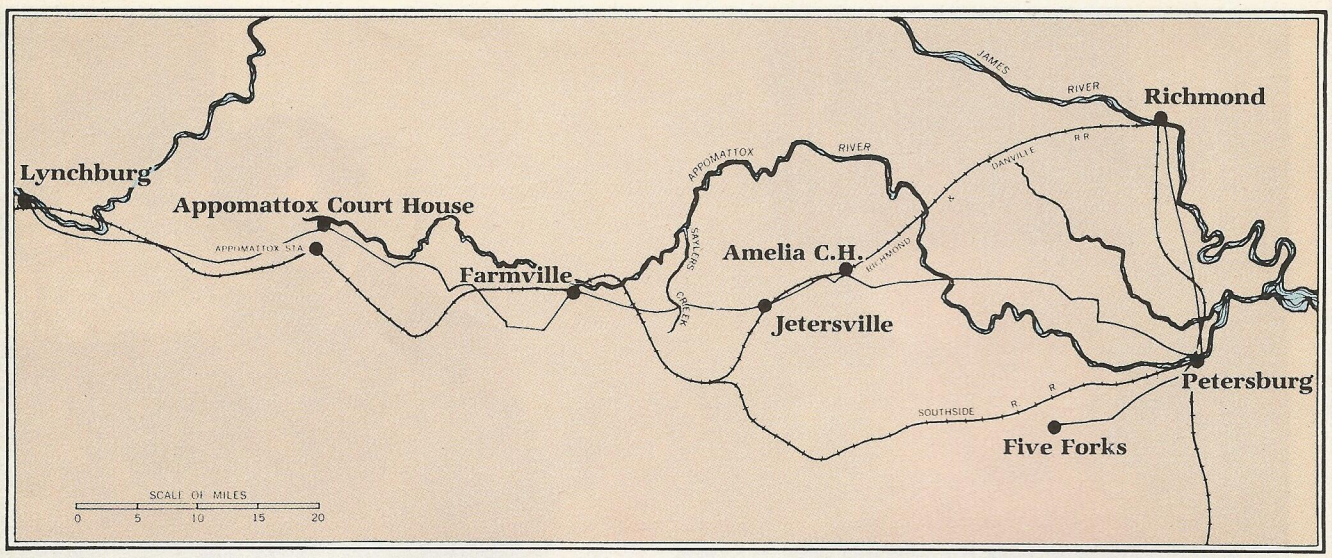
Meanwhile at Rice's Station we skirmished a little, but having a fairly good position, the enemy evidently proposed to turn [our column from its intended direction] in preference to attacking. So when night came, it being impossible now to make the trip directly south to Johnston, we abandoned our lines and changed our course toward Lynchburg. That night march was something fearful. Floundering through rain, mud, and darkness with worn-out and starving horses dragging heavy guns over a narrow road blocked with troops and trains, we were moving all night, and scarcely advanced a mile in an hour. And there was nothing in the prospects for the morrow to cheer one up.

DAY BY DAY, death, wounds, and capture were robbing us heavily of comrades with whom we had been through many campaigns, and now our army was reduced to little more than a collection of fragments, out of food and nearly out of ammunition. The enemy was ahead of us and around us, in numbers that could not be counted. Yet the morale of the men was not impaired, and no one seemed to feel any doubt but that somehow we should still come out all right. Certainly, during all the business beginning at Fort Stedman on March 25, including Five Forks, the Petersburg lines, the defense of Fort Gregg, Sailors' Creek, and all skirmishes up to the final fight at Appomattox Court House on the 9th, the plain, hard, solid fighting of the men was simply wonderful, in view of their surroundings. Up to the very last minute, before the flag of truce stopped the firing, it was as unflinching fighting as it had ever been, and it was not without some successes on a scale proportioned to the numbers engaged.

On the morning of the 7th Major General William

**Johnston commanded nearly 90,000 troops in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida. His agreement to an armistice on April 18 and subsequent surrender on April 26—more than two weeks after Lee's capitulation—ended the war in the East.*

***Brigadier General George Washington Custis Lee, the eldest son of Robert E. Lee.*



Abandoning Petersburg and Richmond after a Federal breakthrough at Five Forks on April 1, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee withdrew his army to the southwest, hoping to eventually join with General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee. Harrassed by Union cavalry and artillery, with horses worn out and rations virtually exhausted, the Army of Northern Virginia retreated toward Lynchburg, Virginia, and desperately needed supplies. But when it reached Appomattox Court House on April 9, overwhelming Union forces blocked the way. Time had finally run out.

Mahone captured over a thousand of the enemy's infantry, and on the afternoon of the same day our cavalry brought in Colonel J. Irvin Gregg of the Federal cavalry and many of his men. And, to anticipate a little in my narrative, on the morning of the 9th itself, our cavalry captured and sent in a section of artillery with horses, harness, and everything complete, down to the red blankets on the horses. I issued them promptly to James N. Lamkin's battery, which had served mortars in the lines about Petersburg, but had been very ambitious to get field-guns. I had promised Lamkin that he should have them, and we considered it a melancholy sort of joke that these came just in time to enable me to make good my word.

About daylight on the 7th we passed through Farmville and crossed the Appomattox to the north bank, burning the bridges behind us as the enemy's cavalry entered the town. We shelled his pursuing columns across the river for a while, and he shelled us back, and then we continued our retreat.

Each day it became more slow and painful, as the animals approached the limits of endurance. At last we had to abandon ordnance wagons and the caissons, and even some guns, which would mire down and could not be extricated. We would cut down wheels and axles and leave them in the road.

The march was kept up until late at night [on the 7th], when I and my staff rode off into a pine thicket and hid, lest stragglers should steal our horses while we lay on the saddle blankets and slept, with the saddles for pillows.

The 8th was but a repetition of the 7th, except that we were less interrupted by the enemy's cavalry, which had left our flank and was being pushed forward to get ahead of us at Appomattox.

SOON AFTER SUNRISE on the morning of the 9th, I came up with General Lee, halted with his staff by the roadside, a mile and a half from the village. Major General John B. Gordon, who was in advance, was already engaged, and the increasing sound of cannon and musketry told that the enemy was in heavy force.

The progress of the column was stopped, and trains were parked in the fields, while guns and infantry moved forward to the sound of the firing. General Lee called me to him, and walking off from the group, sat down on a log and said: "The enemy seems to be across our road in force this morning. What have we got to do?"

Now, our artillery had not been seriously engaged during the retreat and was never in better humor for a fight. The cannoneers, for some days before, beginning perhaps to appreciate the situation, had called out along the road, "Don't let us surrender any of this ammunition! We have been saving ammunition all the war! We did not save it to be surrendered!"

I told General Lee of this, and said that I could show up near forty guns with one hundred rounds apiece, if he wished to give battle. He replied that the force in front of us was too great, that while he had perhaps fifteen thousand infantry, half of them were mere fragments of different commands, unorganized and largely without arms or ammunition, and that he could scarcely concentrate an effective force of eight thousand men, which was too small to accomplish any valuable results. I was not unprepared to hear this decision, for the last

Continued on page 50

Meeting at the McLean House

by Ronald G. Wilson

A Virginia farmhouse provided the setting for the dramatic final act in America's most costly war.

Federal commander Ulysses S. Grant and members of his staff and field command watch intently as Confederate General Robert E. Lee (attended by his secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marshall) acknowledges acceptance of terms of surrender in the Wilmer McLean home, Appomattox Court House, Virginia. This twentieth-century painting by Tom Lovell is regarded as the most accurate depiction of the April 9, 1865, meeting.

EARLY IN THE AFTERNOON of April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee entered the small village of Appomattox Court House on what would be his last ride as commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. He was accompanied by orderly Sergeant George Washington Tucker and two Federal officers, Colonel Orville E. Babcock and Captain William McKee Dunn. Having received permission from General Grant to select a site for a meeting between himself and the Federal commander, Lee had sent ahead his aide, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Marshall, to find a suitable location.

Marshall would later recall how the meeting site was picked:

"We struck up the hill towards Appomattox Court House. There was a man named McLean who used to live on the first battle field of Manassas, at a house about a mile from Manassas Junction. He didn't like the war, and having seen the first battle of Manassas, he thought he would get away where there wouldn't be

any more fighting, so he moved down to Appomattox Court House. General Lee told me to go forward and find a house where he could meet General Grant, and of all people, whom should I meet but McLean. I rode up to him and said, 'Can you show me a house where General Lee and General Grant can meet together?' He took me into a house that was all dilapidated and that had no furniture in it. I told him it wouldn't do. Then he said, 'Maybe my house will do!' He lived in a very comfortable house, and I told him I thought that would suit. I had taken the orderly along with me, and I sent him back to bring General Lee and Babcock, who were coming on behind. I went into the house and sat down, and after a while General Lee and Babcock came in. Colonel Babcock told his orderly that he was to meet General Grant, who was coming on the road, and turn him in when he came along. So General Lee, Babcock and myself sat down in McLean's parlour and talked in the most friendly and affable way."

Half an hour passed. It was, as Douglas Southall Freeman, Lee's biographer, states, "perhaps the longest half hour in Lee's whole life."

At about 1:30 P.M., the approach of horses from the west signaled the arrival of Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and his staff. Grant had ridden more than twenty miles since leaving his headquarters at Clifton that morning. He had experienced a severe headache during the night, but had been cured the instant he received Lee's letter requesting an interview.

Babcock went to the door and opened it. Grant, forty-two years of age, of middle height, slightly stooped, and heavily bearded, came in alone. He was dressed for the field, with boots and breeches mud-bespattered, no sword or hatcord, a private's blouse with lieutenant general's insignia attached, and his trousers tucked into his boots. Fifty-eight-year-old Lee, in contrast, wore a new fine gray cloth uniform, felt hat, presentation sword, sash, gauntlets, and shiny boots. Earlier that morning he had prophesied that he was "probably to be General Grant's prisoner and thought I must make my best appearance."

THE TWO GENERALS exchanged greetings, and then twelve to fourteen officers of General Grant's staff and field command quietly entered the small, seventeen-by-nineteen-foot parlor and arranged themselves behind their general-in-chief. Among those believed to have been present were Major Generals Edward O.C. Ord, Philip H. Sheridan, and Seth Williams; Brigadier Generals Rufas Ingalls, John A. Rawlins, and George H. Sharpe; Colonels Orville E. Babcock, Adam Bandeau, Theodore S. Bowers, Michael R. Morgan, and Ely S. Parker; Lieutenant Colonel Horace Porter; and Captain Robert Todd Lincoln, the eldest son of the president.

General Grant, apparently reluctant to allude to the purpose of the meeting, opened the conversation by recalling a prior encounter with Lee during the Mexican War. After some additional reminiscences, General Lee turned the discussion to the matter at hand: "I suppose, General Grant, that the object of our present meeting is fully understood. I asked to see you to ascertain upon what terms you would receive the surrender of my army." Grant responded that "the terms I propose are those stated substantially in my letter of yesterday," and expressed his wish that the meeting might "lead to a general suspension of hostilities, and be the means of preventing further loss of life." Lee then requested that the terms of surrender be placed in writing so that they might be formally acted upon.

Colonel Parker, a Seneca Indian and secretary to General Grant, brought forward a small oval writing table and leather-bound swivel chair, and Grant, using a pencil, began to write out the terms of surrender in his manifold order book. Legend has it that during the entire proceedings Grant smoked a cigar. At this time he was smoking or chewing about twenty cigars a day.

The completed pencil draft comprised two pages. Grant reviewed the text with his military secretary, made some minor changes, and then the manifold book was passed to General Lee, who sat waiting a few feet away in a cane-backed chair next to a marble-topped table. The Confederate general took out his spectacles, polished them slowly, and carefully began to read the terms.

Grant was later to write:

"What General Lee's feelings were I do not know. As he was a man of much dignity, with an impassible face, it was impossible to say whether he felt inwardly glad that the end had finally come, or felt sad over the result, and was too manly to show it. Whatever his feelings, they were entirely concealed from my observation; but my own feelings, which had been quite jubilant on the receipt of his letter, were sad and depressed. I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause . . ."

Grant's terms would allow all Confederate officers and men to be paroled until properly exchanged. But in his draft the Federal commander had inadvertently omitted the word "exchanged," and General Lee asked permission to insert it. He could not find a pencil, however, and borrowed one offered by Colonel Horace Porter.*

The terms stipulated that the Confederate arms, artillery, and public property were to be surrendered. The officers, however, would be permitted to retain their side arms, private horses, and baggage. Gratefully noting the latter provision, General Lee looked up at Grant and said, "This will have a very happy effect on my army."

Then, before returning the terms to Grant for draft-

**Porter's pencil, now in the collection of the Appomattox Court House National Historical Park, is one of the artifacts displayed in the courthouse visitor center.*

ing in ink, Lee inquired about the provision on horses. Since the men of his cavalry and artillery provided their own mounts, would they also be permitted to retain their horses?

Grant answered that "the terms as written do not allow this," and Lee, with some obvious regret, said, "No, I see the terms do not allow it; that is clear."

Then Grant, immediately sensing the Confederate commander's deep concern for his soldiers, made one of the noblest acts of the war: "I take it that most of the men in the ranks are small farmers," he observed, "and as the country has been raided by the two armies, it is doubtful whether they will be able to put in a crop to carry themselves and their families through the next winter without the aid of the horses they are now riding . . . I will instruct the officers . . . to let all the men who claim to own a horse or mule to take the animals home to work their little farms."

"This will have the best possible effect upon the men," responded an appreciative Lee. "It will be very gratifying and will do much toward conciliating our people."

Colonel Horace Porter, serving as a personal aide to the Union commander, narrates what happened next:

"He handed the draft of the terms back to General Grant, who called Colonel T.S. Bowers of the staff to him, and directed him to make a copy in ink. Bowers was a little nervous, and he turned the matter over to Colonel Parker, whose handwriting presented a better appearance than that of any one else on the staff. Parker sat down to write at the oval table, which he had moved again to the rear of the room. Wilmer McLean's domestic resources in the way of ink now became the subject of a searching investigation, but it was found that the contents of the conical-shaped stoneware inkstand with a paper stopper which he produced appeared to be participating in the general breaking up, and had disappeared. Colonel Marshall now came to the rescue, and took from his pocket a small boxwood inkstand, which was put at Parker's service, so that, after all, he had to fall back upon the resources of the enemy to furnish the "stage properties" for the final scene in the memorable military drama.

"When the terms had been copied Lee directed his military secretary to draw up for his signature a letter of acceptance. Colonel Marshall wrote out a draft of such a letter, making it formal, beginning with, 'I have the honor to acknowledge,' etc. General Lee took it, and after reading it over very carefully, directed that these formal expressions be stricken out, and that the letter be otherwise shortened. He afterward went over it again, and seemed to change some words, and then told the colonel to make a final copy in ink. When it came to providing the paper, it was found that we had the only supply of that important ingredient in the recipe for surrendering an army, so we gave a few pages to the colonel.

"While the letters were being copied, General Grant introduced the general officers who had entered, and each member of the staff, to General Lee. The Confederate commander shook hands with General Seth Williams, who had been his adjutant when Lee was superintendent at West Point some years before the war, and gave his hand to some of the other officers who had extended theirs; but to most of those who were introduced he merely bowed in a dignified and formal manner."

FORMALITIES CONCLUDED, the two commanders engaged in private conversation. General Lee informed General Grant that "I have a thousand or more of your men as prisoners . . . a number of them officers whom we have required to march along with us for several days. I shall be glad to send them into your lines as soon as it can be arranged, for I have no provisions for them. I have indeed, nothing for my own men." Grant then responded, "Suppose I send over 25,000 rations, do you think that will be a sufficient supply?" Lee replied, "More than enough."

The documents now prepared and signed were exchanged at about 3:00 P.M. This simple exchange of letters has often been referred to as *A Gentleman's Agreement.*

Colonel Marshall left the following account of the exchange of letters:

"Then General Grant signed his letter, and I turned over my letter to General Lee and he signed it. Parker handed me Grant's letter, and I handed him General Lee's reply, and the surrender was accomplished. There was no theatrical display about it. It was in itself perhaps the greatest tragedy that ever occurred in the history of the world, but it was the simplest, plainest, and most thoroughly devoid of any attempt at effect that you can imagine."

The rest was casual and brief. Lee requested that Grant notify General Meade of the surrender so that further action might be avoided, and that the armies be kept apart.

Before leaving McLean's parlor, General Lee, keenly observing Colonel Parker and finally recognizing him as a native American, extended his hand and said, "I am glad to see one real American here." Colonel Parker shook his hand and said, "We are all Americans."

Lee thereupon shook hands with General Grant, and left the room. Not being able to see his horse from the porch, he called for his orderly. Nearby a Union regimental band struck up the appropriate air of "Auld Lang Syne." Then, mounting his beloved horse Traveller, Lee rode away to the ordeal of breaking the news to his soldiers and telling them farewell. ★

Ronald G. Wilson is the park historian at Appomattox Court House National Historical Park.

PAINTING BY KEN RILEY; COURTESY OF WEST POINT MUSEUM COLLECTIONS, UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

On April 12, three days after Lee and Grant agreed upon terms of surrender, the remnants of the Army of Northern Virginia marched under their colors for the last time. "An awed silence" prevailed at Appomattox as the Confederate soldiers, numbering perhaps 25,000 men, passed "in proud humiliation" between respectful lines of Federal troops, stacked their arms and ammunition, and tenderly folded their "battle-worn and torn, blood-stained, heart-holding" battle flags.

forty-eight hours had made apparent the desperate conditions to which we were reduced, and I had views on the matter, which I was glad of so favorable an opportunity to express. So I spoke up:

"Then, general, we have choice of but two courses: to surrender, or to order the army to disperse, and, every man for himself, to take to the woods and make his way either to Johnston's army in Carolina or to his home, taking his arms and reporting to the governor of his state. And of these alternatives the latter is the best. For if there is any hope for the Confederacy it is in delay.

"But if this army is surrendered today, the Confederacy is gone. The morale of this army has sustained both the people at home and the other armies. Our surrender would demoralize all, and Grant turning one hundred thousand men, released from duty here, against Johnston, Taylor, Kirby Smith—they will all go, one after the other, like a row of bricks.

"Then, if there is any hope from Europe, we stand a chance by delay; but we destroy it whenever the news of the surrender of this army crosses the water. Or if there is any chance for the separate state governments to make any terms whatever with the Federal government, we stand these chances by delay, and we lose them by surrender. Intimations, too, have been given that each state may make terms for itself, while the Confederacy will not be recognized.

"But even suppose there are none of these chances, suppose there is nothing left but to submit to whatever the enemy chooses to inflict, even then there is one thing the men who have fought under you for three years have the right to ask of you. You care little for military reputation. But we are your men, and your fame is very precious to us. The record of this army as yet is without a blot, and now its last hour has come. Grant is called 'Unconditional Surrender Grant,' and it has been their boast that our fate was to be that of the armies at Fort Donelson and Vicksburg. But the men who have fought under you so long have the right to ask you to spare us the mortification of your asking Grant for terms, and being told, 'Unconditional surrender.' Save us from that!"

I was never in my life so wrought up upon any subject as upon this. Words came to me, and both my argument and my appeal seemed to me unanswerable. For no one could deny the importance of *terms* to prevent vindictive trials and punishments, and there seemed no other chance to secure them.

GENERAL LEE listened to me quietly until I had quite finished, and then said:

"Suppose I were to adopt your suggestion, how many do you suppose would get away?"

I replied: "I think two thirds of us could get away. We should be like rabbits and partridges in the bushes, and they could not scatter like that to catch us."

"Well," he said, "I have less than sixteen thousand infantry with arms in their hands. Even if two-thirds of these got away it would be too small a force to accomplish any useful result, either with Johnston or with the governors of the states. But few would go to Johnston, for their homes have been overrun by the enemy, and the men will want to go first and look after their families.

"As to any help from Europe, I have never believed in it. I appreciate that the surrender of this army is indeed the end of the Confederacy. But that result is now inevitable, and must be faced. And, as Christian men, we have no right to choose a course from pride or personal feelings. We have simply to see what we can do best for our country and people.

"Now, if I should adopt your suggestion and order this army to disperse, the men, going homeward, would be under no control, and moreover would be without food. They are already demoralized by four years of war, and would supply their wants by violence and plunder. They would soon become little better than bands of robbers. A state of society would result, throughout the South, from which it would require years to recover. The enemy's cavalry, too, would pursue to catch at least the general officers, and would harass and devastate sections that otherwise they will never visit.

"Moreover, as to myself, I am too old to go bushwhacking, and even if it were right to order the army to dispurse, the only course for me to pursue would be to surrender myself to General Grant. But I can tell you for your comfort that Grant will not demand an 'unconditional surrender.' He will give us honorable and liberal terms, simply requiring us not to take up arms again until exchanged."

General Lee then went on to tell me that he was in correspondence with Grant, and expected to meet him in our rear at 10 A.M., when he would accept the terms that had been indicated.

My recollection of this conversation is very vivid. When I had finished making my appeal, I did not believe he could refuse it, for he prized highly the affection of his men, and he had, moreover, all the fighting instincts of a soldier. But he showed me the situation from a plane to which I had not risen, and when he finished speaking I had not a word to say.

I had before that fully intended, for myself, not to be surrendered, but to take to the bushes on the first sign of a flag of truce. Many other officers and men had similar intentions. But after my talk with Lee, I and all my friends determined to stay and see it out. And I think nobody did run away, except a few of the cavalry out on the flank, who took a professional pride in getting around the enemy and could not resist the opportunity. And they all came back and surrendered as soon as they got news of the terms given us, and heard also that rations would be issued immediately after the ceremony.

SOON AFTER THIS CONVERSATION I was ordered by Longstreet to select a line of battle for his corps and form the artillery and infantry upon it, that Gordon, who was being forced in, might fall back upon him. I accordingly selected a line about a thousand yards on our side of the village of Appomattox and put about five thousand infantry of Field's, Mahone's, and Wilcox's divisions in position upon it, and crammed it full of artillery, making the last line of battle ever formed by the Army of Northern Virginia.

Meanwhile Lee had ridden to the rear to meet Grant, leaving Longstreet in command. When Lee had been gone over half an hour, Fitzhugh Lee,* commanding the cavalry, sent word to Longstreet that he had found an opening through which the army could escape. Longstreet called Colonel John C. Haskell, commanding one of our battalions of artillery, who was riding a mare celebrated for her beauty and swiftness, and said to him: "Lee has gone to the rear to surrender the army; ride after him and [if necessary] kill your mare, but overtake him and tell him what Fitzhugh Lee has reported."

Haskell immediately dashed down the road at utmost speed and after going about three miles passed the rear guard, and turning a bend in the road, found Lee with his staff dismounted by the side of the road, awaiting an answer to a communication he had sent in to the Federal lines for Grant. Going at full speed, Haskell passed the group a short distance before he could stop his horse. Lee came forward to meet him as he turned back, saying: "What is it? What is the matter?" and then without waiting for an answer said: "You have killed your beautiful mare! What did you do it for?"

Haskell gave his message, and Lee questioned him about the situation and finally told him to tell Longstreet to exercise his own judgment as to what he should do.

Meanwhile, Fitzhugh Lee had found that the supposed opportunity to get through the enemy's line did not exist, and one of Longstreet's staff was sent to follow Haskell and report. Haskell's mare did not die, but was sold after the surrender to a Federal officer for a high price.

While this was going on the situation at the front was growing more critical. Gordon found his short line threatened by an overwhelming force of infantry, while large bodies of cavalry were enveloping his flanks. He called upon Longstreet for help, and Longstreet sent his inspector-general, Major R.M. Sims, to suggest a flag of truce to the Federal commander in his front [and] to ask a suspension of hostilities pending Lee's interview with Grant.

Gordon requested Sims to bear the message, but cau-

**Major General Fitzhugh Lee, a nephew of Robert E. Lee.*

tioned him not to let our men know of his errand. Sims rode out to the left flank, where a line of our cavalry, dismounted behind a fence, were exchanging a hot fire with the enemy along the edge of a wood some two hundred yards off. Then, putting spurs to his horse, he galloped rapidly across to the enemy's line. He had in his haversack a white towel, and as he drew near the enemy he pulled it out and displayed it. As soon as it was recognized (which was not until he was quite near), the enemy ceased firing, and Colonel Whitaker came to meet him. Sims asked to be taken to Sheridan,* but was told that Custer was near and in command of that part of the field, and it was decided to see him.

Going a short distance to the rear, they came upon Custer moving at a gallop, with a brigade of cavalry, to envelop our left flank. Custer presented a striking appearance with his long sandy-colored hair on his shoulders, a red cravat with streaming ends, a large scarf-pin, and brilliant stones in his hat and shoulder-straps. He asked what was wanted, and Sims gave his message: that Gordon requested a truce pending a meeting between Grant and Lee.

Custer said: "We will do no such thing. We have your people now where we want you and will listen to no terms but unconditional surrender."

Sims replied: "Well, sir, we will never submit to that, but you will allow me to carry your message back to General Gordon."

To this Custer assented. During this interview Sims had been followed and joined by Major Brown of Gordon's staff, and the two officers returned together, escorted by Whitaker and another officer.

Gordon was found at the courthouse, where the street was now filled with stragglers and wounded, and he requested Brown and the two Federal officers to go over to the right and endeavor to find Sheridan and secure a suspension of hostilities from him. Meanwhile the opposing forces on the left seemed to find out that something like a truce was going on, and without any general order the firing on each side was gradually discontinued.

AT THIS STAGE of the proceedings Custer undertook a little game of bluff on his own responsibility. Accompanied by an orderly, and waving the orderly's white handkerchief, he left his lines and galloped across to ours, approaching them at a point occupied by the Rockbridge Artillery of Hardaway's battalion, under the immediate command of Major W.H. Gibbes.

As the federals rode up they were surrounded by the cannoneers and some infantry skirmishers, who, not exactly appreciating the situation, and covetous of good boots, actually dismounted the orderly and were about to swap boots with him, and even proposed a like trade to Custer, when he called out to Gibbes: "Gibbes, I appeal to you for protection." Gibbes at once recognized him, having known him as a cadet at West Point, and on his request took him to Gordon. As other parts of the line were still firing, Gordon sent Major W.W. Parker of the artillery to order a cessation of fire. A battery called Johnson's, from Richmond, Virginia, commanded by Captain John W. Wright, was the last to receive the order, and fired the last gun.

Gordon referred Custer to Longstreet, and Gibbes conducted him. Custer, with much assurance in his manner, told Longstreet that he had come from Sheridan to demand the immediate and unconditional surrender of the army. Longstreet, who was generally imperturbable, made no reply until Custer had sharply repeated his demand, when he said coolly that Lee was in communication with Grant on the subject, and that pending their conference neither he [Longstreet] had the right to surrender, nor Custer or Sheridan to make such a demand.

Custer answered: "Sheridan and I are independent here today, and have our troops in a position to crush you out at once, and unless you make an immediate and unconditional surrender we will pitch in."

At this Longstreet blazed out angrily to the effect that they might "pitch in" as soon as they pleased, but that he [Custer] had best get back into his own lines immediately, or his unauthorized presence and his arrogant errand would not be overlooked. Custer made no reply except to ask a safe-conduct back. Longstreet shortly directed his assistant adjutant-general, Colonel Osman Latrobe, to send someone with Custer, and Gibbes and an orderly escorted him back.

Meanwhile Sheridan and Gordon had met near Appomattox Court House, and a suspension of hostilities had been agreed upon until the meeting between Lee and Grant.

After some delay General Lee received a message from Grant that he had left the rear of our army and was passing along his own lines around to our front. Lee accordingly returned, and passing through our line of battle, dismounted close in front, in an apple orchard, near a house said to be the home of Sweeny, celebrated as a minstrel and banjo-player before the war. Here he was left standing alone for a few minutes, having sent his staff off on various errands, and as he expressed a desire to sit down, I had some rails brought from a fence near by and a seat piled for him under one of the apple trees, a short distance from the road. He sat there for perhaps two hours, close in front of Longstreet's line of battle, until Colonel Orville Babcock of Grant's staff came from Appomattox to escort him there to meet Grant.

I made my bivouac in that orchard that night. Relic hunters had already begun to cut limbs from the apple tree under which Lee sat, and within twenty-four hours it was literally dug up by the roots, and not a chip of it was left. I have always regretted since that I did not appreciate how I should come to value some memorial of the event and myself secure a piece of the tree as a memento; for I have since tried in vain to get a piece even as big as a toothpick. I think it was carried off

**Major General Philip H. Sheridan, commander of the Union forces in the area.*

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Chosen by fate or chance for a small but memorable role in history, members of the Wilmer McLean family pose on the front porch of their Appomattox home soon after the end of hostilities.

entirely by Confederates who, standing in our last line of battle, saw Lee sitting under the tree awaiting Grant's messenger. I have never even heard of more than one piece of it since. One of my sisters, "refugeeing" through Carolina, first heard the story of the surrender from a Texan who had seen Lee under the tree, and had cut himself a walking stick from it, and was now footing it for home.

IT WAS ABOUT ONE O'CLOCK when Babcock came from the enemy's line, and Lee, with Colonel Charles Marshall, rode with him back to Appomattox, and then the whole army knew what was taking place.

I think it was after three o'clock when we saw Lee returning. We wished to express to him in some way our sympathy and affection, and I ordered all the cannoneers to be brought from the guns and formed in line along the road, with instructions to uncover in silence as he rode by. He had hardly reached the line, however, when someone started a cheer, which was taken up by others, and then both infantry and artillery broke their lines and crowded about his horse in the road. The general stopped and made a short address. Briefly, it was about as follows:

"I have done for you all that it was in my power to do. You have done all your duty. Leave the result to God. Go to your homes and resume your occupations. Obey the laws and become as good citizens as you were soldiers."

There was not a dry eye in the crowd that heard him, and even he seemed deeply moved. The men crowded around to try to shake his hand or touch his horse, and some appealed to him to get us all exchanged and try it again; but he made no reply to such remarks. Then he rode on to his camp, and the crowd broke up, and then ranks were formed once more and marched off to bivouac, and the Army of Northern Virginia was an army no longer, but a lot of captives awaiting their paroles. But it had written its name in history, and no man need be ashamed of its record, though its last chapter is a story of disaster. And surely those qualities in its commander for which men are loved and admired by friend and foe shone out here with no less luster than on any other field.

MY STORY would be very incomplete did I not refer to the manner in which our exceedingly liberal treatment by Grant was regarded. It was, in the first place, a great surprise, for Grant had never before given any terms to an opponent. Now he seemed anxious to give us everything we could ask for. We knew our inferiority in force and our desperate condition too well to

ascribe it to any hesitation to give us battle again. The generosity of his terms could only be ascribed to a policy of conciliation deliberately entered upon. Of course we were sore and mortified, so much so that we had not much to say to any one; but it put everybody in some sort of hope that, after all, defeat might not mean utter destruction.

Grant's policy of conciliation was followed by everyone in his army, even to the teamsters along the roads. Several old acquaintances hunted me up and, while delicately avoiding all disparagement of Confederate currency, hinted that as a paroled prisoner I might find it convenient to have some variety in my pocketbook, and that it would be a great personal favor if I would let them lend me some of the surplus greenbacks with which they were burdened. Such offers, too, were not confined to those who had been special friends. Afterward, in riding forty miles through the troops and trains of the Federal army, I met with not a single word or look which did not seem inspired with kind feeling and a disposition to spare us all the mortification possible.

I think no one who was not at that surrender can fully appreciate the calamity wrought to the South by the assassination of President Lincoln. For Wilkes Booth slew also the kindly and generous sentiment which already inspired the army, and which would doubtless soon have pervaded the whole country.

But to return to camp on the night of the 9th. The only event of the evening was the arrival of some Federal rations. There was no demonstration over it; but many events have been honored with salutes and hurrahings to make men hoarse which never gave one half the internal satisfaction that these rations did.

I think the full moral effect of the surrender was hardly felt until the next morning, being obscured by the excitement attendant upon it. The next day seemed to usher in a new life in a new world. There was nobody trying to shoot us, and nobody for us to shoot at. Our guns were gone, our country was gone, our very entity seemed to be destroyed. We were no longer soldiers, and had no orders to obey, nothing to do, and nowhere to go.

Looked at merely as a business proceeding, the simple method of paroling the Confederate army and taking charge of its surrendered property was admirably short and effective. Arms were stacked, and guns harnessed up and drawn out along the roads, and the Federal officers came and removed them. Our own captains signed parole papers for their men; colonels for [their] regimental officers; generals for their staffs and regimental commanders. My parole read: "The bearer, E.P. Alexander, Brig. Gen. of Artillery of the Army of Northern Virginia, a paroled prisoner of war, has permission to go home and there remain undisturbed until exchanged."

And then came the general breaking up: the partings with Lee, Longstreet, and the other generals under whom we had fought; with comrades with whom we had shared four years of march, bivouac, and battle; and with the private soldiers, whose enduring courage and devotion no man could know without love and admiration. And not without emotion could we say good-by even to the guns themselves, and to the poor brutes that had drawn them over so many miles of road and upon so many fields of battle.

The fate of our artillery horses was pitiable. We had been out of forage for I do not know how many days, and the horses were rapidly giving out before the surrender. The limit of their endurance now seemed to have been reached, and when they finally pulled the guns to the place of surrender, several hours' delay occurring in their removal, numbers of them lay down and actually died from starvation, harnessed to their guns.

I have omitted a remarkable coincidence which I came upon at Appomattox, and which is worthy of mention.

When I first joined the Army of Northern Virginia in 1861, I found a connection of my family, Wilmer McLean, living on a fine farm through which ran Bull Run, with a nice farmhouse about opposite the center of our line of battle along that stream. Confederate General P.G.T. Beauregard made his headquarters at this house during the first affair between the armies—the so-called battle of Blackburn's Ford, on July 18. The first hostile shot which I ever saw fired was aimed at this house, and about the third or fourth went through its kitchen, where our servants were cooking dinner for the headquarters staff.

I had not seen or heard of McLean for years, when, the day after the surrender, I met him at Appomattox Court House, and asked with some surprise what he was doing there. He replied, with much indignation: "What are *you* doing here? These armies tore my place on Bull Run all to pieces, and kept running over it backward and forward till no man could live there, so I just sold out and came here, two hundred miles away, hoping I should never see a soldier again. And now, just look around you! Not a fence rail is left on the place, the last guns trampled down all my crops, and Lee surrendered to Grant in my house." McLean was so indignant that I felt bound to apologize for coming back, and to throw all the blame for it upon the gentlemen on the other side. ★

Engineer and artillerist E. Porter Alexander graduated from West Point in 1857. As a young officer he was one of the originators of the wig-wag semaphore signaling system. Alexander resigned from the U.S. Army in 1861 and over the next four years rose from captain to brigadier general in the Confederate Army. He took part in numerous campaigns, including Gettysburg, where he commanded artillery batteries supporting Pickett's charge. Alexander was seriously wounded at Petersburg during the summer of 1864, but he returned to active duty in time to participate in Lee's final campaign. Following the war Alexander had a distinguished career as an engineer, educator, and businessman. His comprehensive study of the Army of Northern Virginia, Military Memoirs of a Confederate, *was published in 1907. Alexander died in Savannah, Georgia, in 1910.*

COURTESY OF APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK, VIRGINIA

Appomattox Today

WHEN THE VICTORIOUS and the vanquished left Appomattox Court House, the tiny central Virginia village that had witnessed the beginning of the end of the Civil War settled back into tranquil obscurity, relatively unchanged. No monuments were raised as at other significant Civil War sites. The historic importance of Appomattox, perhaps because of the dismal nature of surrender, went uncelebrated.

But just until 1891. In that year M.E. Dunlap of Niagara Falls, New York, purchased the McLean house. He wanted to transport it to Chicago for the World's Columbian Exposition. Financial support fizzled, however, and Dunlap then decided to move the house to Washington, D.C., for permanent display. But when the house was disassembled in 1893 Dunlap was again unable to raise the necessary funds, and the project was abandoned. Meanwhile, in 1892, the courthouse had burned and village residents began drifting to the growing, nearby railroad town of Appomattox Station.

Finally, in June 1930, Congress authorized a monument for Appomattox. Three years later the National Park Service proposed restoring the entire village. After gaining the approval of Congress and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Resettlement Administration began buying land and, in April 1940, the park was established.

Today most reconstruction is finished. Although not all of the buildings that were in Appomattox in 1865 have been rebuilt, the village looks much as it did the day Grant and Lee met in the first act of the nation's reunification process.

Clover Hill Tavern, a stop on the Richmond-Lynchburg Stage Road, was built in 1819 and is the oldest of the twenty-seven historic structures in the restored village. Other restored or reconstructed buildings within the 1,326-acre park administered by the National Park Service include the Courthouse, McLean House (pictured above), Meek's General Store, Woodson Law Office, Isbell House, Kelly House, Peers House, and the sites of Lee's and Grant's headquarters.

Exhibits and furnished interiors help to bring the historical events to life, and two fifteen-minute audio/visual programs in the Courthouse visitor center provide a background to the village self-guided walking tour.

Appomattox Court House National Historical Park is located about eighteen miles east of Lynchburg, Virginia, three miles north of the town of Appomattox on State Route 24, and about 175 miles from Washington, D.C. The park is open from 8:30 A.M. to 5 P.M. every day except Christmas. From April 1 to October 31 there is an entry fee of $1 per car. ★

Jessie Benton Frémont

Continued from page 29

adversity they faced made her strong while it weakened him. Beneath the surface she seemed more than ever the dominant force.

Yet it was not that simple. Jessie had always needed John's love more than he wanted hers, and so, in a deeper sense, he ultimately controlled their relationship. Elusive, fleeing, always just out of reach, he held her fast. Several of her women friends, who by now saw John as both unfaithful and financially irresponsible, called her continued devotion "Jessie's insanity."

THE FRÉMONTS gained a partial reprieve from their difficulties in 1878, when John was named territorial governor of Arizona. But determined to recoup his fortune, he devoted more time to his mining projects than to his gubernatorial duties, while Jessie, after a year in Arizona, returned to New York to drum up investors for his schemes. A sad series of letters to influential politicians reveals an anxious woman desperately trying to contrive some financial security for her family. In 1881 John was forced to resign his post amid charges that he had neglected his public duty.

In late 1887, when seventy-five-year-old John became seriously ill, Jessie persuaded him to move to Los Angeles for the winter. He, Jessie, and daughter Lily arrived at the height of a real-estate boom, and, with renewed optimism, John was soon trying to sell California land to eastern and European investors. Developers in the new town of Inglewood even gave the Frémonts a house in exchange for their help in selling town lots. But by the summer of 1888 the boom had collapsed, and Inglewood's fancy new hotel and five real estate offices were forced to close.

That fall John returned east to peddle his tired business schemes and to seek a government pension for his military services. Perhaps he was restless as well, or eager to escape the vigor of his formidable wife. Or perhaps, as he and Jessie told each other, he was only reluctantly doing what he felt necessary to earn money for the family. Except for a brief period the following summer, John would thereafter remain in the East.

Nearly two years later, in March 1890, Congress at last granted him a pension of six thousand dollars a year. Then, in early July, living in a New York City boarding house, John Frémont unexpectedly died of food poisoning.

Jessie was devastated. One of her sons feared that she might kill herself. "It was work to stay alive," she admitted later. She was forced to borrow money to meet expenses, and news of her poverty soon leaked out. "Frémont's Family Destitute," read one newspaper headline. Reacting swiftly to this disclosure, Congress granted Jessie a widow's pension of two thousand dollars a year. A group of California women purchased a lot and commissioned architect Sumner Hunt to build a house for her and Lily.

Jessie requested a modern design—"no prettiness—no gingerbread"—and she was delighted with the brown-shingled house erected in a grove of thirty-two orange trees. She filled the house with what she called "wreckage from our old days"—books, pictures, Indian baskets. The treasured portrait of John Frémont by artist John Gutzon Borglum hung over her desk. "It is our true shrine," she said. "We keep flowers there always."

Before John had died, Jessie had begun to build a life for herself in Los Angeles, and his death stalled this late flowering. But gradually over the next decade, she reached a genuine contentment. She continued to write for publication and to see a wide circle of friends, including the suffragist and civic leader Caroline Severance, who described Jessie as "brilliant, spontaneous and original"; and editor Charles Lummis, who called her the most interesting woman he had ever met. "Sunday is my seventy-second birthday," Jessie wrote in May 1896, "and it is not reasonable to be so thoroughly . . . well as I am, but it is so." Sending a photograph of herself to a friend, she claimed that the wrinkles in her face had not yet entered her soul.

JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT had been an activist cast in a supporting role, living through a man the part she might have played herself in another time. She had exercised her own strong will in marrying John Charles Frémont. But in the years that followed, she had been forced to accept that much of life was beyond her control. Her husband's career, begun with flash and brilliance, had guttered out in a series of failures that she, a woman, could do little to prevent.

In a letter to a friend, Jessie once acknowledged her dilemma. Quoting Tennyson's line, "For man is man and master of his fate," she observed wryly, "That is poetry. When one is not man but woman, you follow in the wake of both man and fate, and the prose of life proves one does not so easily be 'master' of fate." At times, she had been bitter. "I am sure if it was all written out in a book," she remarked during the Civil War, "it would grieve anyone to see how I got broken in."

But during these last Los Angeles years, the anger and regret slipped away. Remembering the past, Jessie was justly proud of her part in promoting western settlement and in ending slavery. "Here on this far shore where the serene climate gentles even hard memories," she wrote a friend, "I seem to look back into another life—its strifes ended—only its results in good cherished."

Jessie remained vibrantly alive until the fall of 1902, when she finally seemed to withdraw into herself. Two days after Christmas, at the age of seventy-eight, she died peacefully in her sleep. Her remains were sent east to be buried beside those of her husband, in accordance with her wishes. ★

Pamela Herr is currently co-editing a volume of Jessie Frémont's correspondence.

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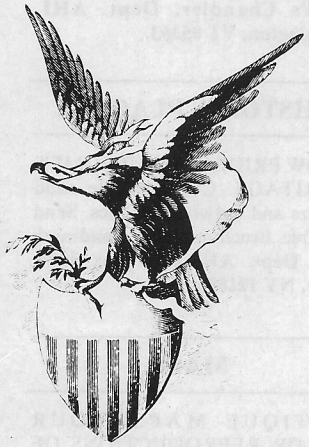

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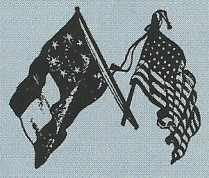

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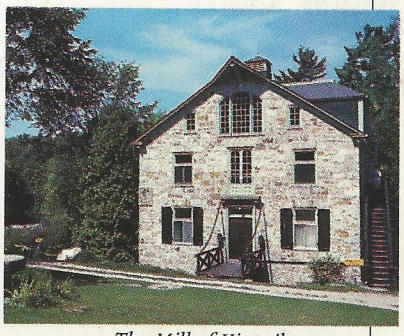

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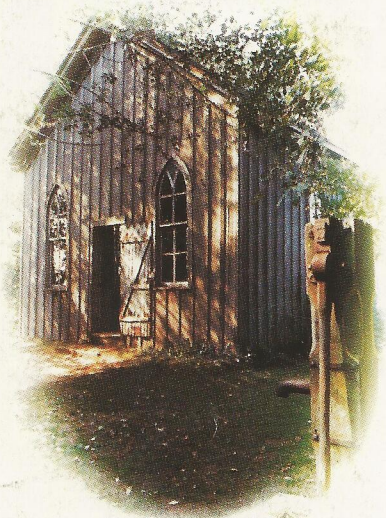

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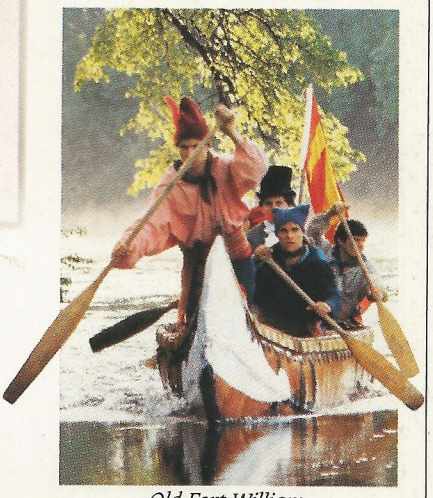

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